PS3 PlayStation 3 | PSP PlayStation Portable | PS VITA PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 060 July 2012

KRATOS!
GOD OF WAR
IS BACK

20

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 60 (July 2012)

World exclusive screens and info

METAL GEAR RISING

Raiden returns with a Revengeance!

REVIEWED

- Max Payne 3
- Starhawk
- Dragon's Dogma
- Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Future
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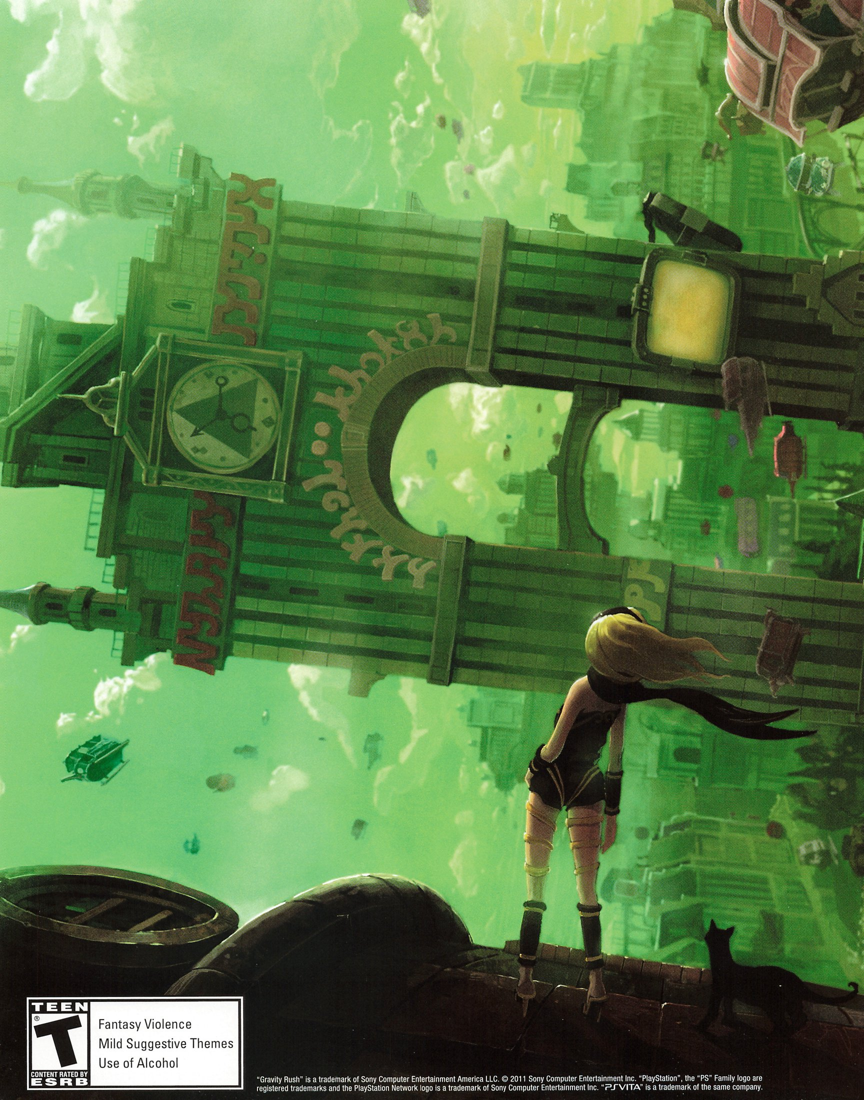

TEEN

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ESRB

Fantasy Violence

Mild Suggestive Themes

Use of Alcohol

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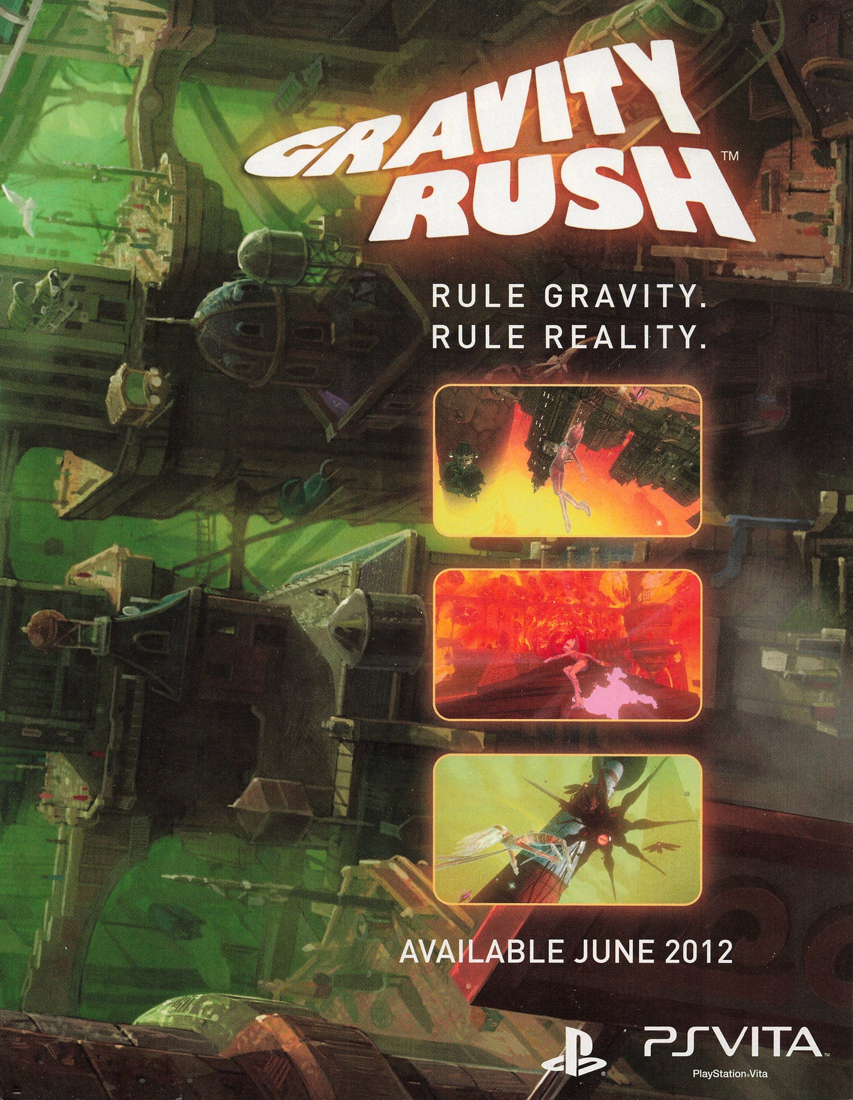
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JULY 2012

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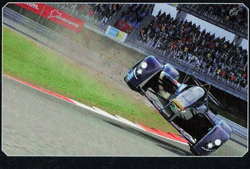

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We wanted rampant destruction, and we got rampant destruction in spades.

Wow, wow, wow, and wow

The heavy hitters come out swinging early this year

When we started working on this issue, I was excited that we'd managed to land an exclusive look at a AAA title. After all, how can you *not* be excited by *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*? Mention anything *Metal Gear* around our office and our inner-fanboy begins to stir, but *Revengeance* is even more intriguing because its pure action-oriented focus is a marked departure for the franchise. We're also huge fans of lead dev PlatinumGames' over-the-top action style, and if *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish* are any indication, *Revengeance* should be a pulse-racing experience that's not to be missed.

But what's with all the other AAA game announcements this month? The weeks leading up to E3 are usually a slow period for coverage—but not this year. Blockbuster titles like *God of War: Ascension, Call of Duty: Black Ops II,* and *Crysis 3* have all been confirmed and we've already gotten early looks at their gameplay.

Our impressions of *Ascension's* multiplayer is chronicled in our lead Big 10 story (p.8), but the gameplay image that still lingers with me is watching a Cyclops' amazingly detailed entrails ooze from its cloven body cavity. *OMG—I think I can tell what he had for lunch!*

As for *Black Ops II*, it's a little early to start the flame war with all the *COD* haters we invariably hear from, but take a read of our preview (p.24) and it's clear that the franchise is attempting to offer a fresh experience.

And having handled PTOM's reviews of the first two *Crysis* games, I'm not *quite* sold on *Crysis 3* (p.14) yet. But if the devs can meld the gameplay from the first entry (which I felt was superior) and build upon the second game's gorgeous graphics, the third time may truly be a charm for the series.

Roger Burchill
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twitter.com/danfpatrick

When art directors display their creative genius in PTOM (à la Ken Bousquet), they get promoted...to work for our boss. So welcome, Dan. You're next in line for the big time!

Scott Butterworth
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Scott Butterworth has never counted his chickens before they've hatched and wonders why anyone would ever bother hatching chickens when they can just eat the eggs.

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Our newest editor Mikel Reparaz has never been one to cut corners, but only because he believes circles are the product of witchcraft and should be avoided at all cost.

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Assistant Editor
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

Someone once told Anne Lewis she needed more hustle and bustle in her life. She received some strange looks when she began running marathons in Victorian-era dresses.

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

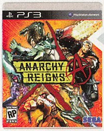
Fill up your life with our monthly guide

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY

INDEPENDENCE DAY

JULY 01

Canada Day
Today we celebrate our neighbors to the north by riding wild moose, eating snow covered in maple syrup, and beating each other senseless with hockey sticks.

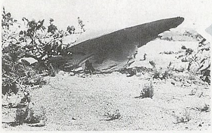


03

Anarchy Reigns
Anarchy will most assuredly reign when *Anarchy Reigns* hits shelves today. We're pretty stoked to bash some faces en masse.

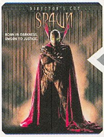
04

Independence Day
Sometimes it's easy to forget Independence Day isn't just an awesome Will Smith movie. It's also the day we signed the Declaration of Independence, which is pretty important.



08

Welcome to Earth
On this day in 1947, the Roswell Army Air Field announced it had recovered a "flying disc" near Roswell, New Mexico. The Roswell Incident was almost forgotten until 1978.



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Spawn: Director's Cut
Spawn returns from the dead once more on Blu-ray. The *Spawn: Director's Cut* features the R-rated version of the movie. Who doesn't love a little R?

SAN DIEGO COMIC CON INTERNATIONAL

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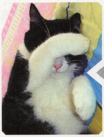
San Diego Comic-Con 2012 7/12- 7/15
It's rare we can dress like superheroes without getting dirty looks. Maybe this year we'll finally whip out that long-hidden Black Canary outfit.



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National Nude Day
We got arrested last time we tried to celebrate National Nude Day. We won't be making that mistake again.

15

Pitchfork Music Festival 7/13-7/15
Boasting a slew of indie groups, the Pitchfork Music Fest returns to Chicago. Only Scott has heard of any of the bands in the lineup.

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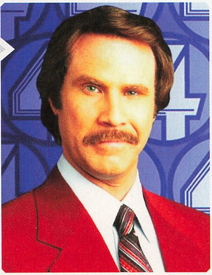
Kind of a Big Deal
Renowned funnyman Will Ferrell celebrates his birthday today, and in honor of that we are going to sit down with our Ferrell favorites. We're thinking *Old School* and *Anchorman*.



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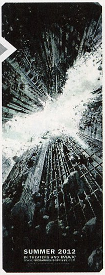
Whacked
On this day in 1860, the infamous Lizzie Borden was born. We remember her as the crazy girl who killed her parents with a hatchet.

20

Rise!
The Dark Knight Rises arrives in theaters today. Do we really need to say more? We're all going to be there.



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A Very Potter Birthday
Until the day he dies, Daniel Radcliffe will be remembered as "that kid who played Harry Potter." So happy birthday Daniel. Now put on the glasses.

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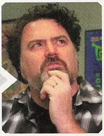
Escape from Birthday Island
Tim Schafer, founder of Double Fine Productions, celebrates his 45th birthday today.



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Minor Sadness
On this day 18 years ago, Congress was presented with the finalized ESRB scale. For readers under 17, today is a day of mourning.

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

OKABU
HARD CORPS UPRISING
TANGO DOWN
RESIDENT EVIL CODE:Veronica X
BURNOUT CRASH!
ModNation RACERS ROAD TRIP
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT RENEGADE SQUADRON
RESIDENT EVIL 5
COMIX ZONE
SHANK
STREETS OF RAGE II
STACKING
DeathSpank
KILLZONE 3 MULTIPLAYER
SOCOM 4
GOLDEN AXE
RESIDENT EVIL 4
MORTAL KOMBAT
FARCRY 2
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
STARHAWK
SHIFT 2 UNLEASHED
JURASSIC PARK THE GAME
ZOMBIES
BORDERLANDS
JOURNEY
GHOST RECON FUTURE SOLDIER
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ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS
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PlayStation® Network

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Worlds Collide
Sony greats mix it up in *PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale.*
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Suited Up
Prophet's back with a bow and an agenda in *Crysis 3.*
⏩Page 14

A Woman's Touch
Bayonetta joins the cast of PlatinumGames' *Anarchy Reigns.*
⏩Page 16

Music Matters
Bulky plastic instruments are a no-show in *Rock Band Blitz.*
⏩Page 20

The Great Debate
PTOM editors grapple with the pros and cons of revenge.
⏩Page 22

1 God of War: Ascension

Kratos returns in a colossal new prequel that looks to conquer multiplayer

You can't keep a good man down—especially when that man is also a deity and headlines a blockbuster game franchise. Yes, with an announcement that's sure to reverberate through the halls of Mount Olympus and the PlayStation nation alike, Sony has confirmed that Kratos will make a spring 2013 return to PS3 in *God of War: Ascension*.

The early indication from *Ascension's* April teaser trailer is that the single-player campaign will delve further into Kratos' pre-god period, picking up the story some six months after Ares tricked him into killing his own wife and child. We should witness a still-mortal, but very damned Kratos struggle with his pain, guilt, and anger as he seeks redemption, revenge, and a way to free himself from Ares' dominion. Expect to experience a very human portrait of the eventual God of War successor.

Gore Multiplier

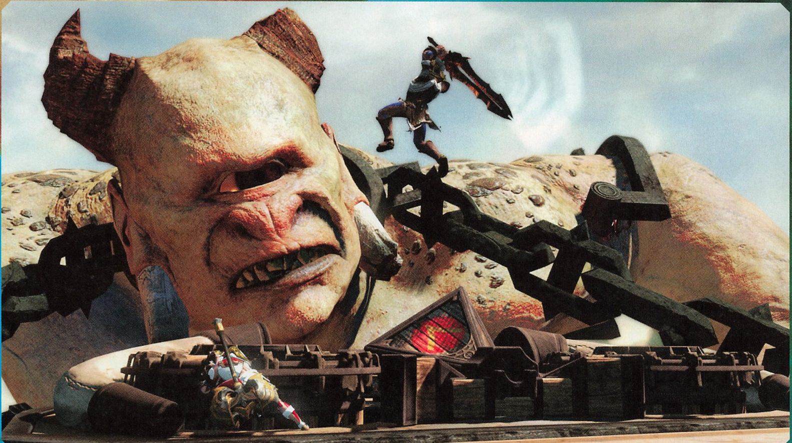
Interestingly, our first early look at *Ascension's* gameplay focused on the game's all-new (and long-rumored) multiplayer component rather than the franchise's traditionally vaunted single-player action. The live eight-minute demo from Sony's Santa Monica Studios team consisted of an arena-style domination mode called Execution that had two teams—the "red" Trojans and the "blue" Spartans—vie for control of giant, chain-dealing winch mechanisms. Attached to the chains? A giant Cyclops of titanic proportions that the devs referred to as Megalops.

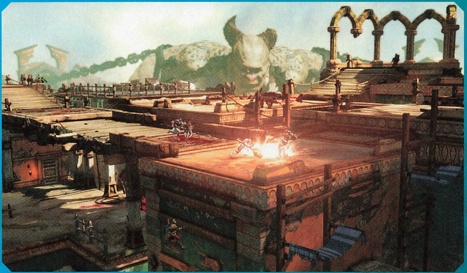
Once one team possessed both control points, the action shifted to an attack-and-defend scenario, with the victorious team rewarded with an epic showdown against the massive mono-eyed creature. This culminating boss battle perfectly recreated the style and scope of the franchise's legendary single-player face-offs, as three team members joined forces to grapple the behemoth's face with chain hooks and slowly reel him in. Once within range, the remaining warrior finished off the demo with an emphatic cinematic flourish as he delivered a spear directly into Megalops' gargantuan eye.

As game director Todd Papy put it: "We want to make sure that [multiplayer] feels like a *God of War* game. Has the scale and scope that we're known for. Navigation, 'wow' moments, visceral melee combat, gore kills... We took all the single-player experience, boiled it down into an essence, and moved it into the multiplayer genre."

Beyond Deathmatch

One surprising revelation of *Ascension's* multiplayer is that Kratos will not be a playable character. The devs' reasoning is that they wanted to avoid a situation where only one player could be the headlining Kratos, with everyone else relegated to generic warriors—or even worse, have matches populated by a multi-colored array of Kratoses. Conceptually, the multiplayer is intended to be a contest between champions of





▲ One thing we're still not clear on is what the losing team does while the victors confront Megalops. Watch?

> "We boil [multiplayer] combat down to a few words: powerful, brutal, flashy, cinematic, and responsive." *–Todd Papy, Game Director*

No Girls Allowed

There are no female characters in *Ascension's* multiplayer. "The reason is that everything is built off of Kratos' rig, and I can tell you right now that female characters on Kratos' rig do not look pretty," says game director Todd Papy.

the gods—unknown heroes who (like Kratos) have aligned their fates to a particular god. This alignment system will have each player "sell their soul" to either Zeus, Ares, Poseidon, or Hades to earn and access god-specific armor sets, weapons, specials, perks, and magics to customize their character.

But as impressive and intriguing as the multiplayer appears to be, the demo also raised as many questions as it answered. While up to eight players can participate online in team-oriented modes, the devs have explicitly stated that there will be no splitscreen capability, no drop-in/drop-out support, and no A.I. bots to flesh out or even allow for matches with an odd number of participants. The stated design objective is to deliver a unique, balanced multiplayer experience that captures the spirit and feel of the franchise's campaign mode, but it will present some interesting matchmaking challenges and may, perhaps, require a realignment of players' online expectations and habits. It's a somewhat daunting quest, but who better than Kratos to confront the rigid shooter conventions that currently define the online multiplayer experience?

The Big 10

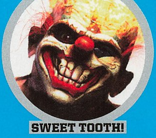
Stories everyone's talking about

KRATOS!

PARAPPA!

MAEL RADEC!

SLY!



SWEET TOOTH!

2 Simply Smashing

The A-list of Sony society is set to faceoff in PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale

In order to make a game on the sheer scale of Nintendo's *Super Smash Bros.*, a publisher must possess a wealth of diverse characters from which to draw. As one of the few that could pull it off, Sony is gearing up to unleash *PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale*, which pits heroes and anti-heroes alike against one another in absurdly over-the-top four-way brawls. The objective? Knock all opponents off the platform and into oblivion.

Battles take place in levels mined from various PlayStation worlds. One level, Metropolis, hails mainly from the *Ratchet & Clank* series. A constantly shifting series of moving platforms, gears, and landscapes, the level itself becomes a character to be reckoned with. And that it does, when halfway through the match, a Hydra from *God of War* suddenly appears to complicate matters.

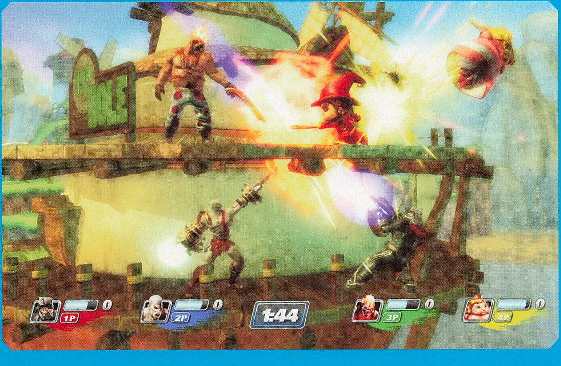
Each of the six characters shown during our hands-on session had his own styles and strengths. For example, Colonel Mael Radec, leader of the Helghast forces in the *Killzone* series, is a ranged character that attacks with rifles and grenades but can also use melee attacks and a pistol at close range. Longtime favorite "superflat" rapper PaRappa uses some skateboard-centric kung fu and a boombox to deliver the hurt, while *Twisted Metal* goon Sweet Tooth drops mines and literally spits fire.

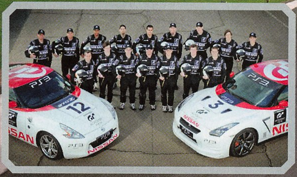
Successful combat fills up a special attack meter, which has three levels that each offer a uniquely devastating attack that can take out an enemy immediately. Fill the bar completely, and we can unleash a room-clearing level-three attack.

Mascot Massacre

The elements we saw—which also included *Fat Princess'* leading lady and master thief Sly Cooper, as well as levels from *Patapon, Hot Shots Golf, Buzz!*, and *LittleBigPlanet*—represent only a small portion of those that will be included in the final game. Plus, Sony has hinted that some third-party characters could join the cast, though obviously nothing's been confirmed yet. The game is playable either online or "four on the sofa," so even though no release date has yet been announced, now would be a good time to begin preparing for plenty of sore fingers and dead arms.

▼ Sure the visuals are cute and the action cartoony, but the competition is *serious*.





GRAN TURISMO

3 Gamers, start your engines

Sony's second GT Academy aims to uncover a real-life racer

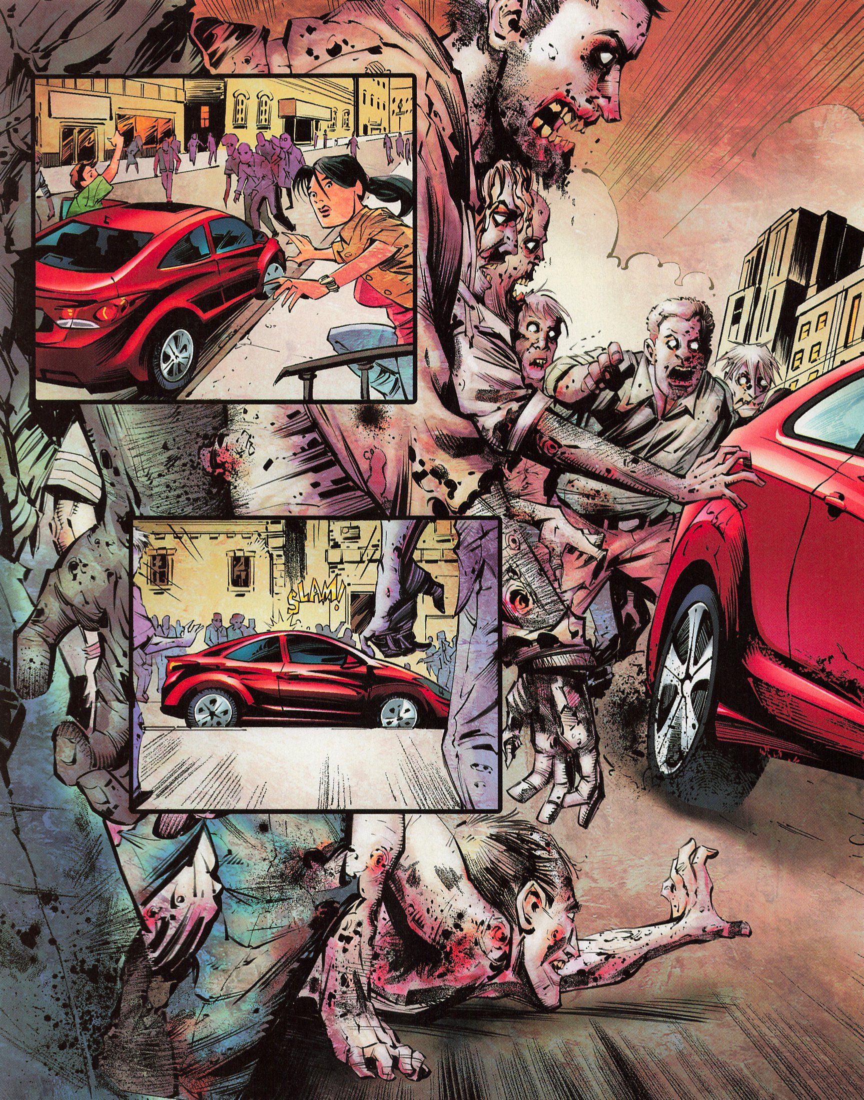
Mastering the precise physics and daunting courses in *Gran Turismo* requires an intense level of dedication, but do the skills imparted in Sony's racing simulation translate onto the actual tarmac? If past GT Academy competitors are any indication, the answer is yes. But the theory will once again be put to the test in the second North American edition of Sony's GT Academy. The upcoming reality competition (to be aired on Spike TV later this year) plucks the best virtual drivers from online leaderboards and lets them battle to represent Nissan as a competitive racer at worldwide events.

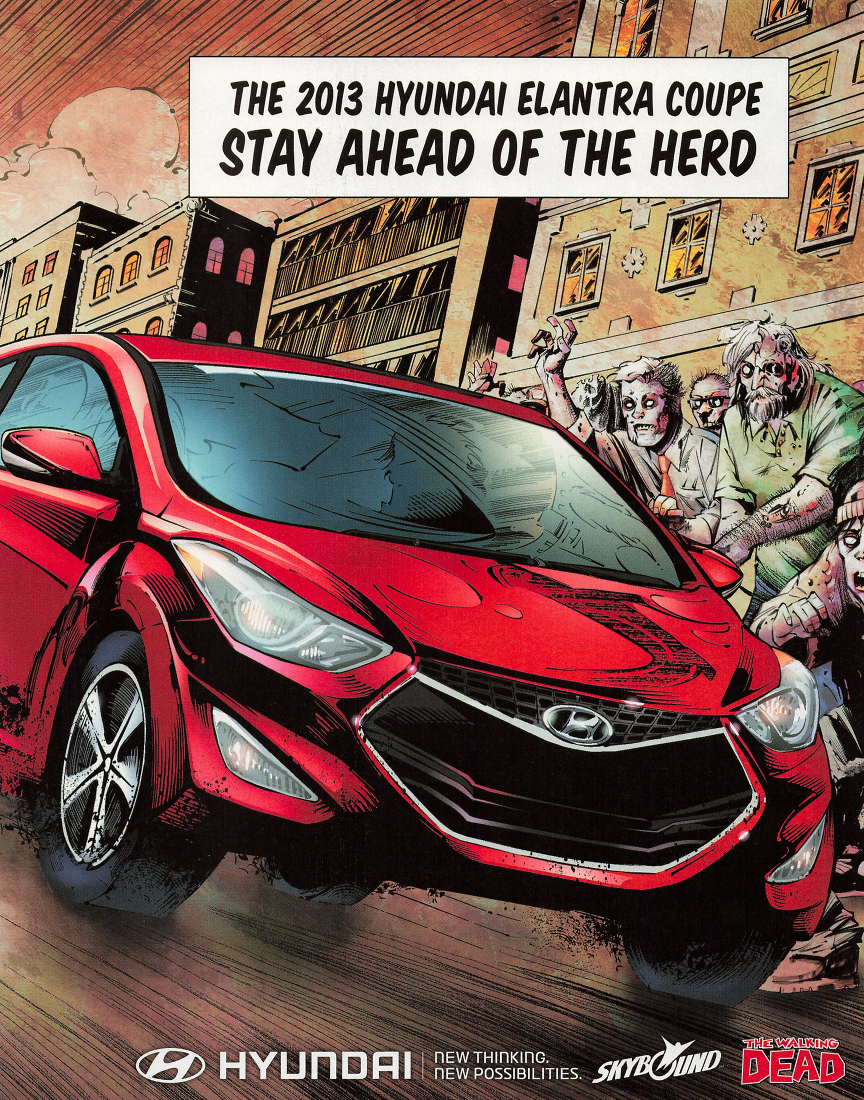
Unlike last year, however, hopefuls don't need a copy of *Gran Turismo 5*. Anyone with a PS3 and a PSN account can log into the PlayStation Store and download the free GT Academy 2012 demo. Early practice rounds will be unlocked throughout May, though the final two rounds—the last of which determines who will make it past the qualifying stage—open up on June 11. Registered racers will then have until June 24 to post their best times on the final time trial, and the top 32 finalists will be sent to the National Finals in July.

From there, the best 16 drivers will be plucked from the set to appear on the show, which spotlights a week's worth of mental and physical trials—including piloting actual Nissan racing cars—spread across multiple TV episodes. More than 53,000 eager participants entered last year's contest via *GT5*, so with the free download now available to all, expect stiff competition in the run-up to GT Academy 2012.

Back on track

Last year's winner, 30-year-old Bryan Heitkotter from Fresno, Calif., was out of work when he participated in the competition. He's since raced in events for Nissan across the U.S., Middle East, and Europe. "GT Academy is a truly unique opportunity," he says. "Traveling and racing around the world has been an amazing, life-changing experience."


SLAM!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NEW POSSIBILITIES.
SKYBOUND
THE WALKING DEAD

4 Crossfire

Crysis 3 gives new meaning to "concrete jungle"

Dev Talk

"What really makes a man? Is it the perception of who we are or is it who we are in flesh and bones?"
Rasmus Højengaard
Director of Creative Development, Crytek

The first question that came to mind during our early look at *Crysis 3*: "Wait, is that a bow?" And sure enough, it is. "He's the most advanced super soldier in the world. Giving him the most basic type of weapon felt almost borderline arrogant," laughs *Crysis'* creative development director Rasmus Højengaard.

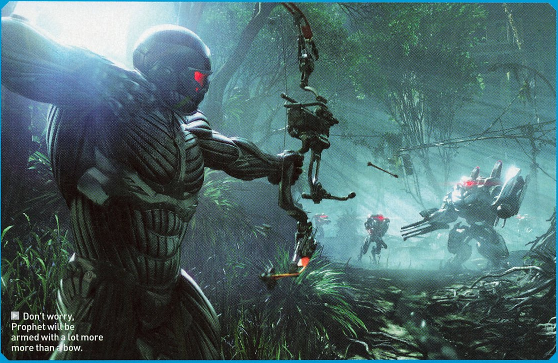
It's an intriguing choice, to be sure, but "old meets new" seems to be a prominent theme in the third installment of Electronic Arts' *Crysis* franchise as we're reintroduced to old friends and enemies—including a man we all thought dead.

Prophet, the gruff protagonist from the first game, returns as the leading man in *Crysis 3*. Working for himself this time, he's on a mission seeking redemption for his past actions. Needless to say, Prophet's return comes as a bit of a shock considering [SPOILER ALERT] he ate his gun at the end of *Crysis 2*, but Højengaard assures us there is both an explanation and some heavy significance behind this decision.

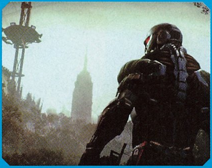
"Obviously he blows his brains out and kind of comes back as an A.I.," reveals Højengaard. "We're playing around with the theme of—in this future world—what is the concept of being alive? What's really inside the suit?" In *Crysis 2*, after Prophet's suicide, it's suggested that the suit preserved his spirit, but for all we know, there may not even be a physical body operating the Nanosuit anymore.

Behind the Mask

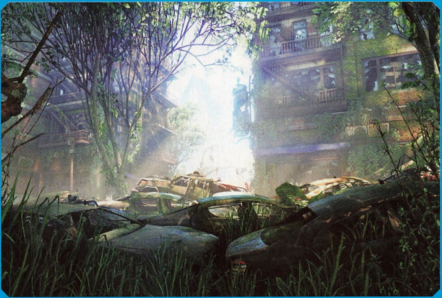
With or without Prophet, the powerful suit itself has received a few welcome upgrades. Prophet now has access to a hacking function and can control and interact with mechanical aspects of his environment. Due to the alien tech in the Nanosuit, Prophet can also use alien weaponry, though once all the ammo has dried up, he must discard the weapon and keep moving. The suit's cloaking ability appears to last longer and recharge faster now—enabling us to spend more



▶ Don't worry, Prophet will be armed with a lot more more than a bow.



▲ It's New York alright, just a little overgrown.



▲ Traffic jams offer good coverage for those who want to sneak their way through enemies.

> We're reintroduced to old friends—including a man we all thought dead.

time in stealth mode—and for the first time in the series, Prophet can attack while cloaked using his trusty...bow.

Unlike the new and improved Prophet, Cell Industries—the evil corporation that sought to use alien tech to rule the world in previous games—seems to be up to its old tricks. Ostensibly to "cleanse" the world's major cities of the Ceph infestation suffered during *Crysis 2*, Cell has contructed an elaborate series of "Nano Domes," which were engineered to accelerate plant growth and return the cities housed within to their wild roots. But as is always the case with evil corporations, Cell has ulterior motives. Like, say, wanting to cover up the fact that the Ceph are still very much alive.

Brave New World

Crysis 3 lets us explore New York City's Liberty Dome some 20 years after the events of the previous game. The dome has broken down the Big Apple's buildings, creating a lush, organic world that serves as an open-world sandbox. The dome's augmented plant growth has created various types of environments, which Højengaard referrs to as the "Seven Wonders of the Urban Rainforest." These seven diverse regions allow for different styles of gameplay while always encouraging players to "be the hunter."

Depending on the environment, skyscrapers form the tops of mountains, parking lots become grasslands, and city streets become swamps. This approach allowed the developers to create something new and unfamiliar by cleverly combining environmental elements from the first two *Crysis* games. "We wanted to go back to doing some more organic stuff [as in the original *Crysis*], but we like the idea of the whole urban thing because it puts in a human context when players can relate to a location," explains Højengaard.

Our early look at *Crysis 3* indicates that it should have no problem living up to the sky-high visual standards that the franchise is known for. The real challenge will be overcoming the series' sometimes inconsistent gameplay experience and overly convoluted storyline. But Højengaard referred to this as "the best game of the franchise so far," so here's hoping that Prophet and his game find redemption when it arrives in 2013.

Can't wait? Play these

Crysis
(PSN, 2011)
"The PSN port doesn't look as pretty but it's still a credible FPS contender."
Holiday 2011 issue
8

Crysis 2
(PS3, 2011)
"Everything functions agreeably but nothing engages exceptionally."
May 2011 issue
7

▼ Bayonetta's unique proportions and versatile coif seem tailor-made for online brawling.

5 Anarchy Reigns

PlatinumGames' online brawler makes a sexy signing

Ding, ding, ding! Hearing that the well-rounded, lollipop-sucking Bayonetta is making a guest appearance in *Anarchy Reigns* is like hitting all the jackpots in Vegas simultaneously. Available as a pre-order bonus (in Japan, at least), the sexy Umbra Witch looks right at home thrusting her gun-capped heels into the faces of anyone that isn't her.

Her infamous wicked weave attacks are also present and correct—we've seen her create a makeshift guillotine out of those versatile strands, as well as use her hair for a little pole dancing. Yes.

Encouragingly, *Anarchy Reigns* looks every bit as ridiculous as everything else that's emerged from the vaults of PlatinumGames, with absurdly flamboyant action and some outrageous combos. Those expecting a campaign will be left disappointed, however—*Anarchy Reigns* is online only, but features plenty of multiplayer modes to sate our buttonmashing lust, and it's all about dispatching enemies in the most extravagant fashion possible.

Other cameos include a host of characters from PlatinumGames' 2009 Wii title, *Madworld,* but our eyes belong to the first lady of action, and we can't wait to kick all kinds of ass with the bespectacled wonder again.

You know what would make us even happier, though? Confirmation of a *Bayonetta* sequel, that's what.

6

Aliens encounter

Gearbox Studios' Randy Pitchford on Aliens: Colonial Marines and working with Ridley Scott

Having spoken to Ridley Scott, how have you translated his vision and made it work for your game?
You know, that first discussion, I wasn't there, and I'll never forgive [Gearbox co-founder] Brian Martel for that. But Brian was there. It was a very speculative discussion. They weren't specifically talking about, "Okay, what are we going to do here?" There was a desire to understand one another and to understand the creative values that were there, and a way that a collaboration could happen.

Ridley got very passionate about it, brought out his storyboards, blew the dust off of them—clearly these hadn't been out in 15 years or so—and started going through them. When they talked about the film, Brian was sharing what it meant to him, what he'd do with the franchise, and they talked about the backstory. Ridley shared the universe as he sees it, and how and why everything exists.

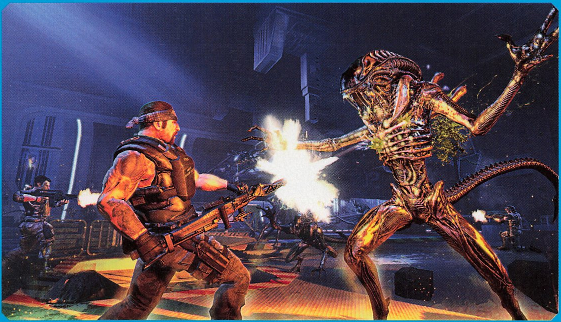
How open was Fox's team to the ideas that you were throwing out at them?
20th Century Fox cares very deeply about its franchises. It also knows the value of talent, and trusts talent.

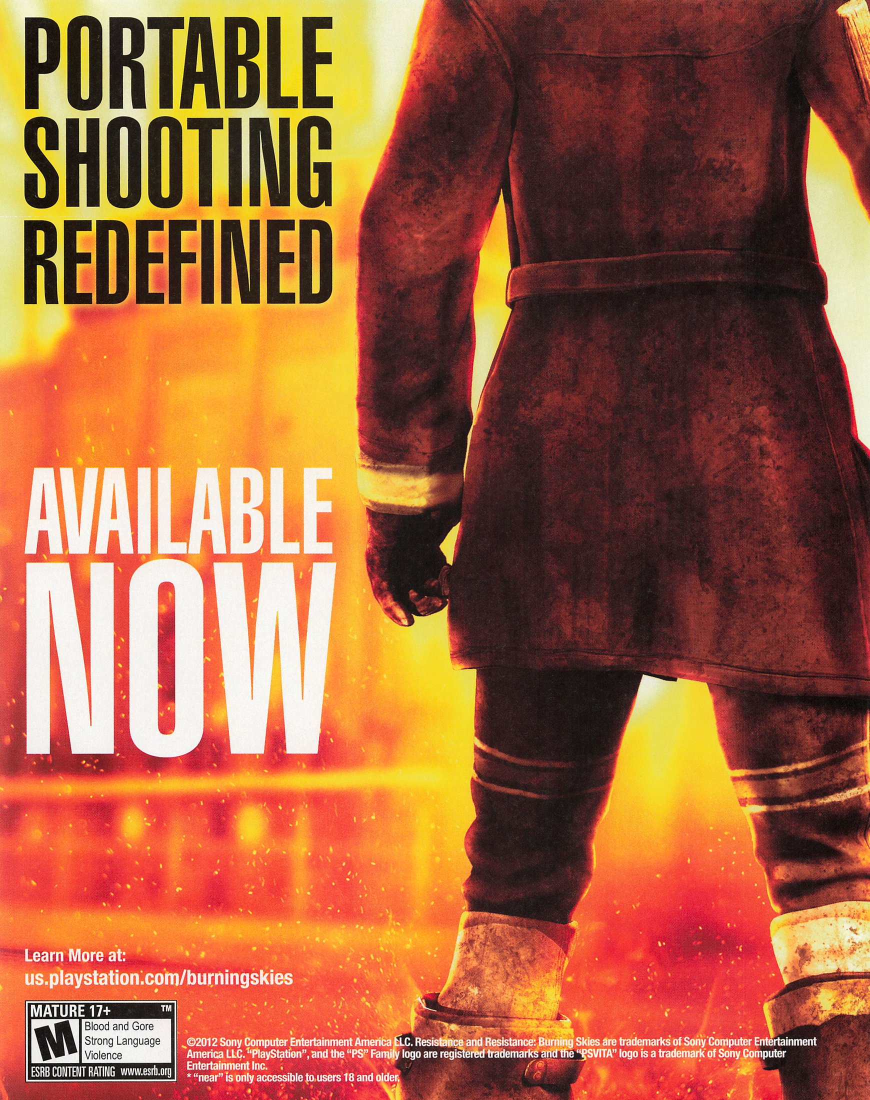
You have a couple of different kinds of people who approach existing talent. Some care about it so much they want to stay with what's in there. And there's a risk that they're not taking enough of a risk, they're just recreating something that already exists. Then there are others who think they could've done it better and want to change it and make it their own.

The correct balance is a bit of both. That's one of the reasons why we loved J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek* movie. It's true to the core of *Star Trek*, but it also took risks and brought it into a new place. And I think we found a way—like it's stuff that we're familiar with and know, but it's pushing it in new ways. It's an all-new story, not a retelling of the film. It takes place later, with all-new twists, turns, and characters, but we still get to go back to LV-426, we still get to go back to the *Sulaco*. It's gotta be new, it's gotta be fresh, and you have to provide a storytelling experience that hasn't been had before.

If *Aliens* was just plonked into game form, it'd be a corridor shooter. How have you approached the level design?
I like that bias and assumption by the way, because when players start to have it, we leverage that bias—because the *Sulaco* is a vessel. The first act of the game takes place in the *Sulaco*, but eventually you end up on LV-426, and that's a world. So now it's not an open-world game, but when you've been in the corridor for a while, and all of your expectations are on the corridor, you realize "Holy crap, I'm now in this desolate place"—that's kind of a cool moment.

▼ Call us naive, but that grunt seems underdressed for a fight with an acid-blooded monster.





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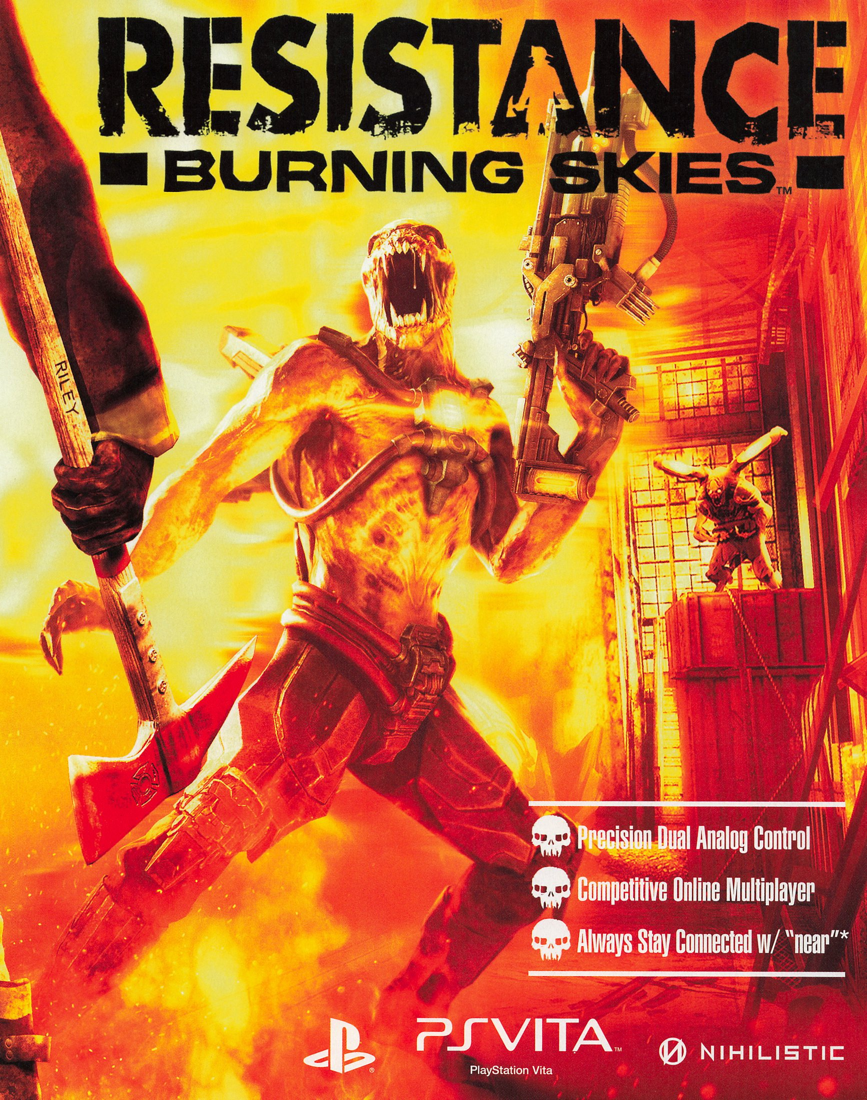
* "near" is only accessible to users 18 and older.



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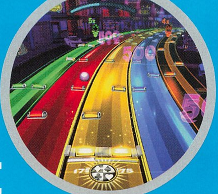


7

Keeping the beat

Rock Band Blitz maintains the music library while dropping the instruments

Legendary Rock?

Not ready to let go of guitar-based gaming? Like *Rocksmith* and *Power Gig: Rise of the SixString*, *BandFuse: Rock Legends* utilizes a real stringed guitar for gameplay, though its side-scrolling note charts offer a fresh twist that's more akin to reading sheet music. *BandFuse* is due out later this year and features real licensed videos behind the note charts, not to mention lessons from former Guns N' Roses lead guitarist Slash.

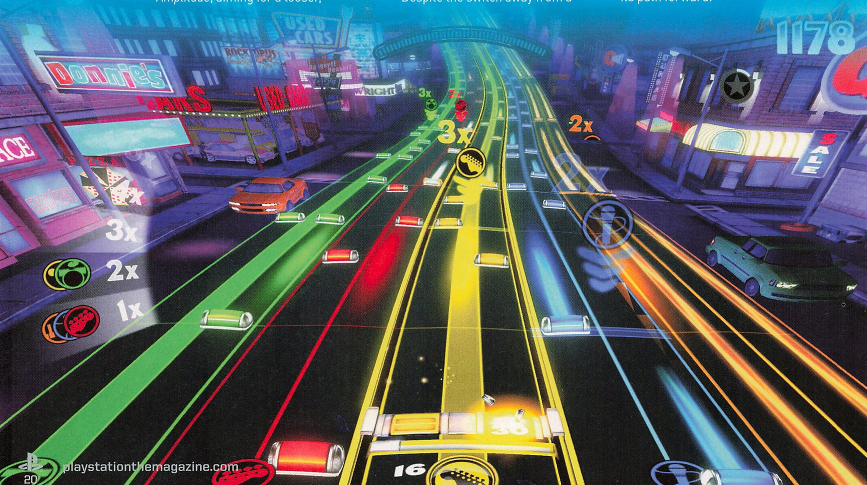
With the rhythm genre's fall from sales supremacy and *Guitar Hero* taking an extended vacation as a result, the fate of the *Rock Band* franchise seemed distressingly unclear. Fortunately, Harmonix's hit music series is back in action this summer, but the instrument-shaped controllers that defined the earlier entries aren't along for the ride in this unique new PSN release.

Rock Band Blitz is a single-player, controller-based evolution of the series that—like the PSP exclusive *Rock Band Unplugged* before it—takes strong cues from Harmonix's PS2 niche favorites *Frequency* and *Amplitude*, aiming for a looser, arcade-style experience. Rockers are responsible for playing every instrument heard in the song, swapping between them with the shoulder buttons while tapping along to the two-note streams that flow toward us on the screen.

Players will need to skillfully navigate the entire available sonic spectrum to max out the multiplier for each instrument and rack up sky-high scores. Flawless play can also trigger special abilities, such as batting a ball around the screen *Breakout*-style to earn points for knocked-out notes—all while still playing the ones that reach the bottom of the screen.

Despite the switch away from a true full-band experience, *Blitz* doesn't ditch the thousands of downloadable and disc-based tracks released in the past. Impressively, all can be imported into the game and enjoyed without an extra fee. Plus, *Blitz* will launch with at least 25 built-in tracks, including Foster the People's "Pumped Up Kicks" and Rick Springfield's "Jessie's Girl," which can then be imported back into *Rock Band 3* for free and played with plastic instruments.

Rock Band Blitz is a surprising next step for the franchise (and the genre), but it looks like an entertaining and accessible way to keep fans rocking while the wider rhythm genre plots its path forward.



8

Vita Style

Keep your new portable protected and looking good with these Vita accessories

PS Vita Face Cover

$15 | horiusa.com

"Face Cover" is a bit of a misnomer here, as this is more accurately a plastic exoskeleton that completely encases the Vita. The plastic isn't rugged enough to protect from severe drops, but it does offer protection from minor bumps and scratches without the bulk of a storage case. We like how all the Vita's controls and sockets remain accessible with the Face Cover on, and the double-hinged lid is a nice touch that keeps the NVG card slot easily accessible. It also serves as a handy grip when flipped completely around.

PS Vita Hard Case

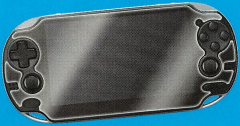
$15 | horiusa.com

Hori's Hard Case offers more substantial protection than the Face Cover, but it's not as rigidly constructed as its name implies. Instead, it's comprised of a durable synthetic material that seems well-suited for absorbing impacts. The vertically-oriented case has an integrated belt loop, but it's a bit bulky to be comfortably worn at the hip. Using the included carabiner to clip the case onto a backpack, or simply tossing the case inside another carry bag, works better. There are storage slots for two extra Vita games inside.

PS Vita Game Card Case 12

$7 | horiusa.com

If you've got an extensive Vita games library like us, it's easy to misplace NVG cards—especially when on the go. The Game Card Case conveniently offers one-stop storage for up to 12 Vita games, or we can designate one of the slots for memory card storage with the included attachment.



PS Vita Screen Protective Filter

$7 | horiusa.com

There's not a whole lot of difference between screen-protection films at the end of the day. But we do like how Hori's Protective Filter offers protection beyond the boundaries of Vita's OLED screen, with additional coverage for the areas surrounding the D-pad, analog sticks, and face buttons. It's a little thing, but we appreciate every extra bit of protection.

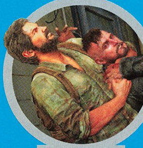
9

The Readers' Most Wanted

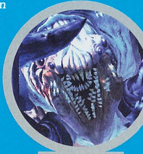
The top five games remain relatively unchanged, with the only swap being between *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* and *Grand Theft Auto V*. In fact, most games on the list are still there. *Men in Black* and *Spec Ops* got bumped from the list, replaced by newcomer *Lost Planet 3*, while *The Last of Us* clawed its way back up after nearly falling off. *BioShock Infinite* keeps jumping on, off, up, and down the Most Wanted, but this month it's standing strong in the top 10.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

01 *Grand Theft Auto V*
02 *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*
03 *Resident Evil 6*
04 *Assassin's Creed III*
05 *Madden NFL 13*
06 *BioShock Infinite*
07 *DmC: Devil May Cry*
08 *The Last of Us*
09 *NBA Live 13*
10 *NBA 2K13*
11 *Borderlands 2*
12 *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*
13 *Ratchet & Clank Collection*
14 *The Amazing Spider-Man*
15 *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron*
16 *Tom Clancy's Rainbow 6: Patriots*
17 *NHL 13*
18 *Lost Planet 3*
19 *Star Trek: The Game*
20 *Darksiders II*



THE LAST OF US



LOST PLANET 3

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling data was tabulated on April 29, 2012.

10 Is the revenge theme played out?

Perhaps it's a dish best not served at all

Yes
Says the story snob
Scott Butterworth

Here's the thing about revenge: it's easy. No, not the years of planning and stalking and stabbing—that's all very tricky (trust me). I'm talking about revenge as a narrative device. As soon as you introduce the idea of revenge, the plot writes itself. The motivation, the story arc, the resolution—literally every component falls into place with little thought or effort, encouraging game creators to be unimaginative.

I get why it happens. Everyone understands revenge. You don't need all that tedious "character development." You tell players, "Hey, that dude killed your wife/dad/houseplant," and off they go. All subsequent violence is justified, and a clear goal awaits them on the other side of the long, linear corridor. But without taking the time to build a world and allow players to grow attached to the characters, the moment at which the hero finally exacts his revenge will be utterly meaningless. Because it wasn't the players' father, it was the *character's* father. And most of the time, we didn't even know the guy!

Revenge is just a symptom of a larger problem. All too often, games' stories feel like an afterthought shoehorned in at the last minute to loosely string together a series of unrelated encounters. In a situation like that, of course writers fall back on simple solutions like revenge. Still, taking revenge off the table might force writers to be at least somewhat creative when they start shoehorning.

No
Says the vanguard of payback
Anne Lewis

Do you remember elementary school? Getting picked on for being a runt, or because you got braces? Do you remember daydreaming about getting some payback by punching all your classmates square in their stupid faces? No? *Huh.* Okay then.

I may be just a little addicted to the desperation someone seeking revenge feels. When the main character in a game has nothing left to lose and throws everything he has into hunting down and destroying the people who ruined his life... that's what gets me out of bed in the morning.

Revenge has seen such longevity because it works phenomenally as a plot device. What's more compelling than a man hunting down the people who took his family from him? Sure, I can't beat up the awful old man who cut me off on my way to work, but I *can* mutilate anyone in James Heller's way as he tears through New York in the name of his family.

When I look at all the games in this issue alone dealing with the idea of retribution, I see so much variety. Raiden's road to "revengeance" differs substantially from that of *Dishonored's* Corvo. I don't think Prophet's story in *Crysis 3* will play out like *Prototype 2*. And don't get even me started on *God of War*.

There are still so many ways to tell a revenge tale. As long as people keep it creative, I can get behind as much vengeance as they can throw at me.

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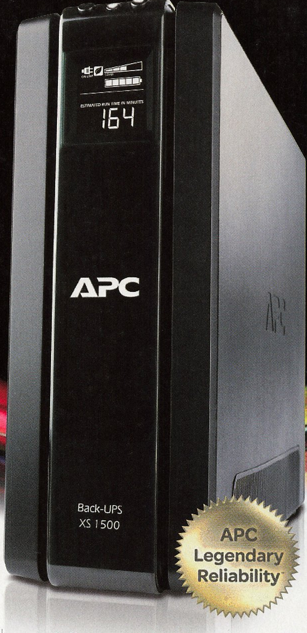

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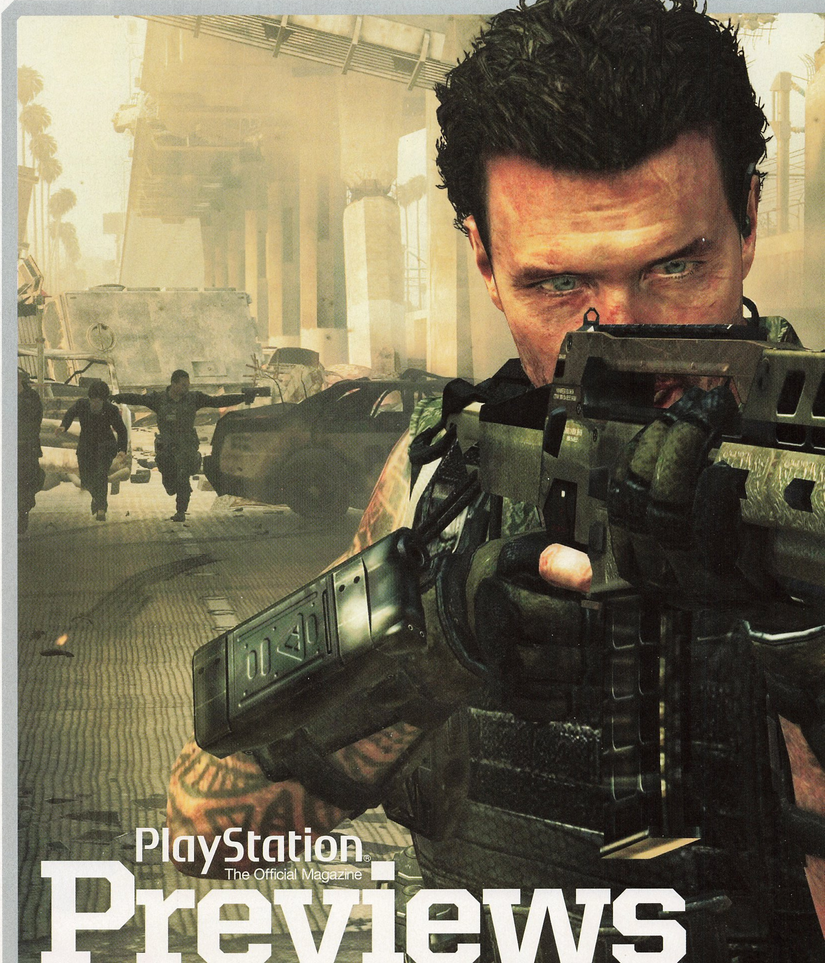

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Previews

Quick Pitch

Past and Future

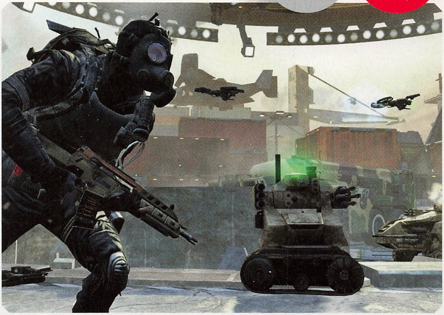
The Cold War-oriented storyline focuses on two time periods: the late 1980s and the year 2025.

Freedom of Choice

We'll be presented with different ways to tackle problems, and ourr decisions will help shape the narrative.

Robots!

The battlefield of 2025 is filled with advanced technology, including an intimidating selection of military drones.



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Activision** Dev **Treyarch**

Call of Duty

Black Ops II

Treyarch sets its sights on reinventing the world's biggest shooter franchise

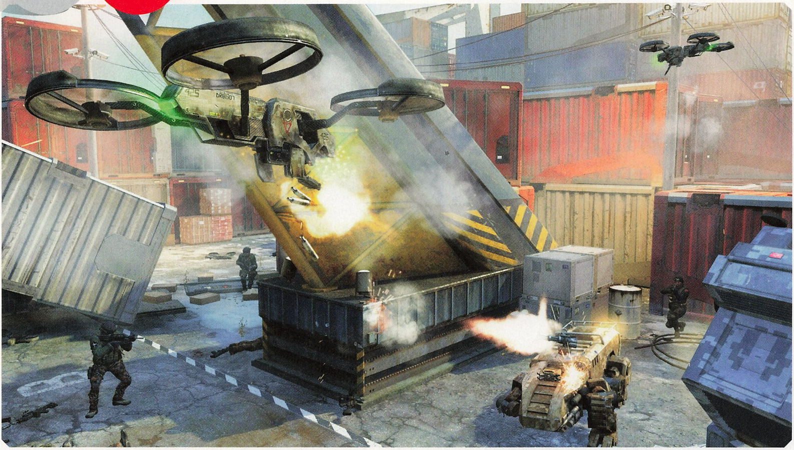
It may be the most popular shooter on the planet right now, but *Call of Duty* isn't really a series we've come to expect a lot of surprises from. Oh, sure, its plots are filled with the requisite stunning twists and startling revelations, but we've formed a pretty clear idea of what to expect. *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* aims to buck those expectations, and not just because it's partly set in the future.

Combining the Cold War spy missions of *Black Ops* with the America-under-siege spectacle of *Modern Warfare*, *Black Ops II* will follow two separate, but intertwined, narratives: that of Alex Mason, hero of the first *Black Ops*, who fights Soviet hegemony on the clandestine battlefields of the late 1980s; and that of his son, David, who follows in his father's black-ops footsteps in the near-future world of 2025. Both storylines have two things in common, the first being Frank Woods. Mason's sidekick for most of the first *Black Ops*, Woods survived his apparent death by grenade, and returns as Alex Mason's sidekick (and will, apparently, still be alive in 2025).

The second common thread is the game's villain, one Raul Menendez. Introduced during the '80s plotline, Menendez resurfaces in 2025 when he hijacks America's entire drone fleet (which, according to Treyarch, will make up a significant chunk of the U.S. military in 13 years) and uses it to attack several key U.S. cities at once. It's in one of these, specifically Los Angeles, where our first real glimpse of *Black Ops II's* future began.

War Changes

Our introduction to David Mason's storyline began with a bloodied Secret Service agent screaming in our faces, in what turned out to be the (female) ▸▸



△ While part of the story campaign, Strike Force missions take a more open-ended approach.

president's limo. As the motorcade raced down one of LA's freeways with a full police escort, sirens blaring, the drones made their presence known by shooting down a helicopter. Its wreckage bounced past in a slo-mo, debris-spewing fireball, partially collapsing the freeway and causing a spectacular crash just ahead of the limo—which it plowed right into.

> Our decisions *and* performance during missions will affect the direction of *Black Ops II's* overarching Cold War.

Crawling out of the wreckage, Mason manned a turret on a nearby APC, using its rockets to shoot down a few drones. An on-foot firefight across the shattered freeway soon followed, with Mason and his squad taking down Menendez's soldiers in a bid to protect the president, and it was here that Mason was offered a simple choice: use a sniper rifle to cover the president as his squad rappelled down from the broken freeway and rushed her to safety, or follow them down and protect her on the ground.

It was a small choice, but a precursor to bigger ones Mason can make later on, some of which will actually branch the story in different directions. It was also an introduction to a new piece of 2025 tech: a sniper scope made with the same technology used in airport full-body scanners. In practical terms, this let Mason see through solid objects, and rendered enemies as silvery, easy-to-target silhouettes.

Five essential ingredients for Cold War intrigue

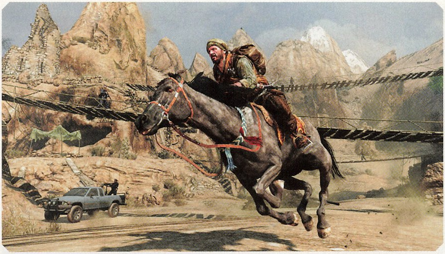
1 **Rare Earth Elements** Essential to electronics and almost entirely controlled by China, these are the basis for *Black Ops II's* fictional second Cold War.

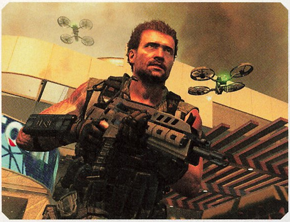
2 **Drone Warfare** Already a major part of U.S. military operations, drones will be a constant presence on the battlefields. That's something that doesn't bode well for *Black Ops II's* world.

3 **Oliver North** The former U.S. Marine-turned-pundit is a consultant for *Black Ops II's* '80s sections, and will help re-create the era's tactics, tech, and personalities.

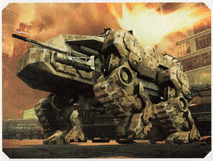
4 **David Goyer** The *Batman Begins* and *Dark Knight* writer is handling *Black Ops II's* script, promising to bring more complexity and emotion to the explosions and shooting.

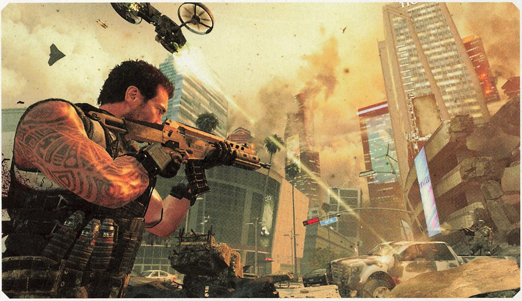
5 **Wired for War** The book by P.W. Singer (also a *Black Ops II* consultant) describes the military's increasing reliance on drones, and inspired the game's futurist direction.





▲ Not all of America's drones have gone rogue. Gun-equipped quadrotor drones can be called in for quick support.





As the fight spilled out onto the streets of downtown LA, Mason came into contact with something new: a hulking land drone called the CLAW (pictured above). Outfitted with four stubby legs (which look as though they can fold to become tank treads) and a mounted minigun, the CLAW was a miniature walking tank capable of letting loose an intimidating growl and an even-more-intimidating stream of bullets. However, it had one fatal flaw: attacked from the side, its legs were easily disabled, one by one.

Once the CLAW was down, Mason ducked into a nearby shopping center and encountered a few more of Menendez's men. Tapping at a translucent, flexible display on Mason's wrist summoned a couple of flying, machinegun-equipped "quad drones," which began shredding everything in Mason's path. Exiting the mall led Mason to an intersection full of abandoned cars, at which point the battle was cut short by the collapse of a nearby skyscraper. Aside from knocking Mason out again, this added a layer of ash and ruin to the surroundings—but left Mason intact enough to jump behind the controls of a VTOL jet, leading to a free-flying aerial battle with drones across LA's skyline.

Freedom Fighting

Our first glimpse of *Black Ops II*'s future was big, explosive and impressive, but it's just the start of what's planned. Aside from the '80s missions (at least one of which will involve Mason and Woods riding motion-captured horses through Soviet-occupied Afghanistan) and the promise of revamped multiplayer and a new, expanded Zombies mode, Treyarch introduced something completely new: Strike Force missions. Integrated into the campaign, these are nonlinear sandbox levels that will let players freely jump between drones, infantry or an "overwatch" flyover perspective, from which they can view the entire battlefield and issue orders accordingly.

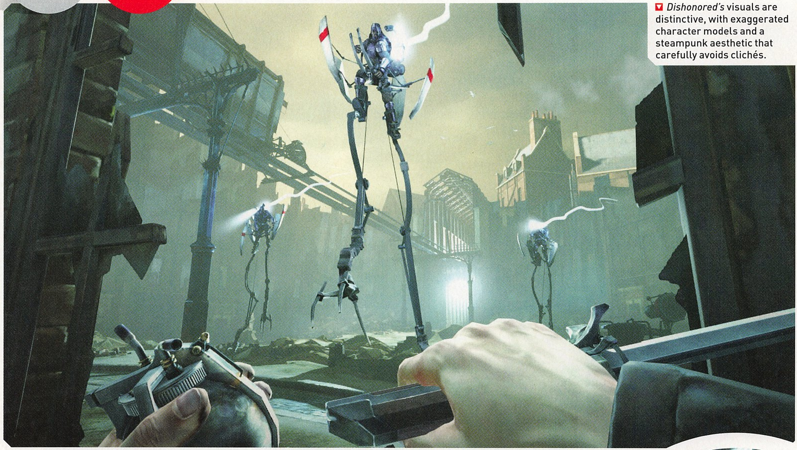
This is where choice becomes especially important; while Mason can pick which Strike Force missions to pursue, they aren't optional, and picking one will make others unavailable. It's also possible to fail one of these and still continue the story, meaning that our decisions *and* performance will affect the direction of the game's overarching Cold War.

While we've only seen a relatively small chunk of it, it's clear at this point *Black Ops II* is going to be an extremely high-end production. And with a script by *Dark Knight* scribe David Goyer, and the promise of PC-quality graphics running at 60 frames per second on consoles, it stands a good chance of being the most jaw-dropping *Call of Duty* to date. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Dev Talk

"We wanted to branch out on this one, and introduce new gameplay and concepts, and new ways to play and enjoy *Call of Duty*. Everything, from the creative, from the story, all the way through the gameplay choices, even touching the campaign structure in a way that we hadn't."

Mark Lamia
Treyarch studio head



Dishonored's visuals are distinctive, with exaggerated character models and a steampunk aesthetic that carefully avoids clichés.

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **Arkane Studios**

Dishonored

A gentleman never leaves a debt unpaid

As a supernatural assassin, Corvo enjoys many powers: He can stop time, see through walls, even possess the bodies of other creatures. But he didn't start out this way. At one time, Corvo was simply a respected guardian of the Empress. It wasn't until he was framed for her murder and left to rot in an unlit dungeon that he was granted his powers by a mysterious man called the Outsider—a being the developers at Arkane Studios describe as "God and the devil rolled into one." While the Outsider's motives are unclear, Corvo's are simple: answers and revenge.

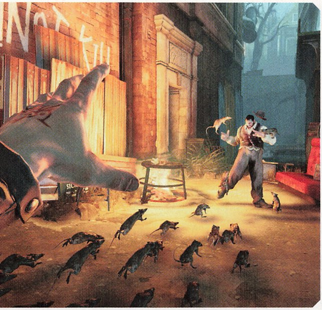
His quest unfolds in the fictional city of Dunwall, a grimy Victorian metropolis that falls somewhere between America's colonial whaling towns and a derelict, steampunk version of London. Though this setting seems to invite a sandbox experience, *Dishonored* is not an open-world game. The missions themselves, however, are remarkably open-ended, borrowing from *Deus Ex: Human Revolution's* school of level design by providing players with paths and options for every playstyle imaginable.

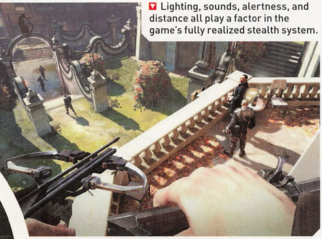
Our demo mission, for example, challenged Corvo to infiltrate a bathhouse/brothel and eliminate a pair of corrupt lords, but provided no explicit instructions on how to do so. On their first playthrough, the developers kept it stealthy, beaming into the body of a fish to swim in through the pipes, teleporting up to the rafters to eavesdrop on the guards, laying steampunk proximity mines (and hiding the resulting bodies), and eventually boiling the target by locking him in a room and cranking up the steam. With a little more work, Corvo could have "neutralized" the target with a non-lethal, story-based solution, but apparently those take some serious effort.

The next playthrough, by contrast, was far bloodier and only visited a handful of the same locations. Instead of swimming in through the moat, the devs ran across some rooftops and assassinated an enemy from above a la *Assassin's Creed.* After entering the bathhouse through the now unguarded balcony door, they proceeded to unleash all kinds of chaos, alternating between a short, bladed weapon on the R2 button and the radial wheel of powers on the left

DUNWALL WHISKEY

Though the game is being published by Bethesda, don't expect *Fallout*-style dialogue trees.





▼ Lighting, sounds, alertness, and distance all play a factor in the game's fully realized stealth system.

(very *BioShock*). The highlight definitely came when the devs briefly froze time, possessed a guard, and walked him in front of the bullet he had just fired, essentially forcing him to shoot himself.

This mission went quickly both times, but the developers pointed out that, had they taken more time, they could have earned rewards through exploration. Remember eavesdropping on those guards? Occasionally this will result in bonus objectives, or reveal the location of a helpful item. And had things gone less smoothly and they'd been forced to restart, randomized guard routes would have prevented the mission from becoming too predictable. Though with all the powers at Corvo's disposal, we don't see how *Dishonored* could ever be unsurprising.

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

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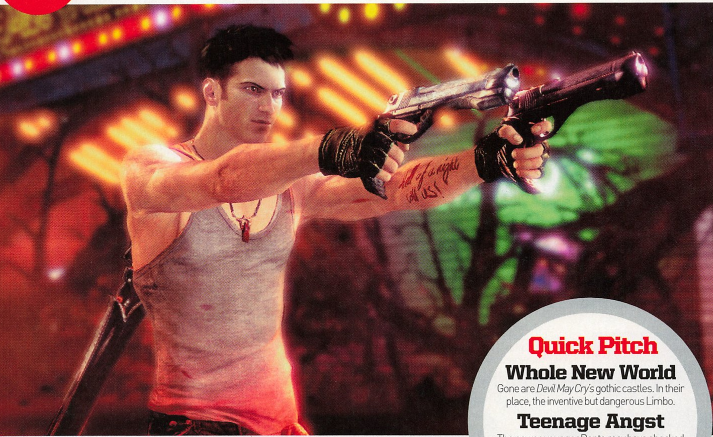


Quick Pitch

Whole New World
Gone are *Devil May Cry's* gothic castles. In their place, the inventive but dangerous Limbo.

Teenage Angst
The newer, younger Dante may have shocked fans, but his cockiness is infectious.

Ready to Rumble
DmC's veritable arsenal of moves could put other games to shame.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Q4** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Ninja Theory**

DmC Devil May Cry

Exercise your demons

In Ninja Theory's *DmC*, it's Dante against the world. Literally. The brash young demon hunter consistently finds himself dragged into "Limbo," an alternate plane of reality that seems to exist directly on top of the physical world we all know and love. Even though Dante can see people phase in and out of Limbo, he can't actually interact with them while he's there. The only things he *can* interact with are the countless demons out for his blood. And unfortunately for Dante, Limbo itself clearly wants him dead as well, reacting like a host to a virus.

Cloaked in super-saturated colors and swirling clouds of red ash, the whole world seemed to react to his presence during our demo at a dark carnival: the walls closed in, the ground gave way to a bottomless abyss, and the streets twisted and contorted to block his path, all while demonic monstrosities rushed in from every direction. Doesn't seem very sporting—but what better way to put *DmC's* deeply varied combat to the test?

Inferno

Where most action games give us just two buttons to mash in various patterns, *DmC* provides layers upon layers of options. Dante's go-to sword serves as the foundation: Using our DualShock's face buttons, we can unleash of flurry of basic slashing attacks on our enemies. If we pull the L2 or R2, however, Dante instantly switches to a new melee weapon (one for each trigger) without even breaking his combo, automatically tripling our attack options. Then on top of that, Dante can execute a launcher move that sends his enemies skyward, where all of his attacks differ from their ground-based counterparts.

But wait, there's more! We can also whip out Dante's signature pistols and fire off a few shots at any time or implement any of his jump and dodge maneuvers to get a better angle on the target. And finally, using Dante's "Angel" and "Demon" abilities, we can either pull enemies toward us or pull ourselves toward our enemies, like *Mortal Kombat's* Scorpion. Should everything go according to plan, we'll be rewarded with a flashy finishing move to put down those demons for good.

Certainly, all these options can sound overwhelming, but in practice, we found both the controls and the combat itself to be totally intuitive. Though we started off with basic hacking and slashing, we gradually incorporated more elements until we looked (and felt) like a professional demon slayer: flashy, fluid, and *fast*. The game manages to hit that "accessible but deep" sweet spot while still encouraging creative, skillful play. Throw in Dante's defiant snarkiness, and suddenly we've got one hell of a franchise reboot. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Want more?

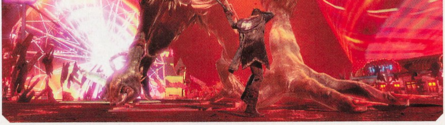
PS3
CLASSICS HD
Devil May Cry
CAPCOM

Nobody ever likes the new guy, right? Well, *Devil May Cry* purists can always stick to the original games, especially now that all three are available in one slick HD collection. But play *DmC* if you find yourself wondering, "What made Dante who he is? Why does he hate demons so much?"

Dante absolutely refuses to be impressed or intimidated.

JACKPOT!
TV LAND
PRIZES

Not exaclty Dan Brown's take on angels and demons.



This rude beast pulled a totally naked and very hungover Dante out of his trailer. Heck of a start.

When Dante's not busy slashing demons, he can use his powers to traverse challenging environments.

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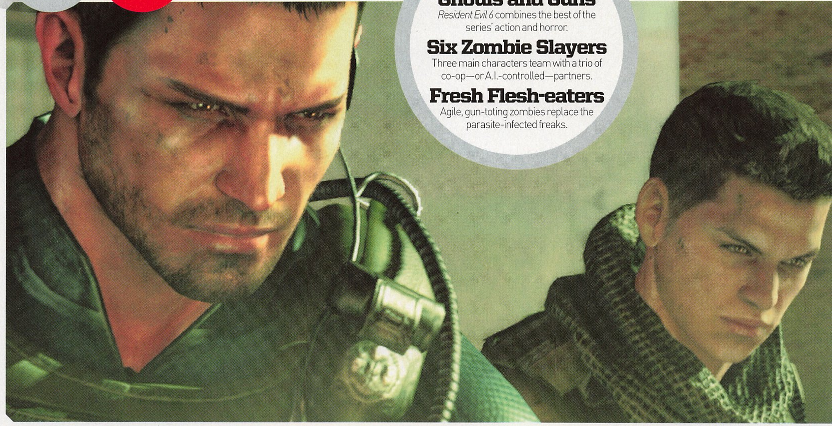


Quick Pitch

Ghouls and Guns
Resident Evil 6 combines the best of the series' action and horror.

Six Zombie Slayers
Three main characters team with a trio of co-op—or A.I.-controlled—partners.

Fresh Flesh-eaters
Agile, gun-toting zombies replace the parasite-infected freaks.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**

Resident Evil 6

Capcom amps up the action without sacrificing the scares

Fans alienated by recent *Resident Evil* entries favoring zombie-splattering action over the franchise's original nerve-fraying focus may want to catch the next bus to Tall Oaks. The opening setting for one of *Resident Evil 6's* trio of campaigns, the small town evokes a sense of dread we haven't experienced since creeping through Raccoon City's undead-infested streets.

In Tall Oaks, returning *RE4* protagonist Leon S. Kennedy explores an (apparently) abandoned college shortly after the President of the United States, speaking at the institution, is infected by a mysterious fog. Now just another zombie in a suit, the flesh-craving commander-in-chief leaves Leon with no choice but to put a bullet in his brain.

After reducing the leader of the free world to a pulpy puddle, Leon teams with Secret Service agent Helen Harper—a playable character in online or splitscreen co-op mode—to escape the town with their lives, and maybe some answers. The duo soon discovers a man stricken with a nagging cough, who's desperately searching for his daughter, who disappeared when the mist interrupted the president's speech.

As the three cautiously search the school, we're hit with the sort of foreboding we felt just before that virally infected canine came crashing through the window in the first *Resident Evil*. Several minutes in, we still haven't encountered any crazed hordes; instead, our fragile psyches are treated to scurrying rats, bloodstained walls, and the occasional flash of lightning.

While the atmospheric setting and deliberate pacing had us feeling like we were back in the original *RE's* creepy mansion, *RE6* isn't about to send players scrounging for ammo or typewriter ribbons. In fact, things kick into high gear when the survivors find the missing girl; another apparent victim of the fog, she's also hacking like she's got a two-pack-a-day habit. Father and daughter soon go feral—in a closed elevator, no less—and Leon and Helena frantically fight them off. Upon exiting the entrails-covered lift, the pair face a parking garage occupied by more zombies than automobiles. As decaying corpses start hitting the floor as fast as Leon's expended shell casings, *RE6* shows it can tax reflexes *and* minds.

While the demo's final moments proved that Capcom's attempting to scratch itchy trigger fingers as well as chill spines, there's more to discover. From multiple protagonists supporting different stories and playstyles to new monsters and even new maneuvers (in addition to finally being able to shoot while moving, Leon can now attack from a prone position), *RE6* is packing more surprises and secrets than Umbrella Corp. **MATT CABRAL**

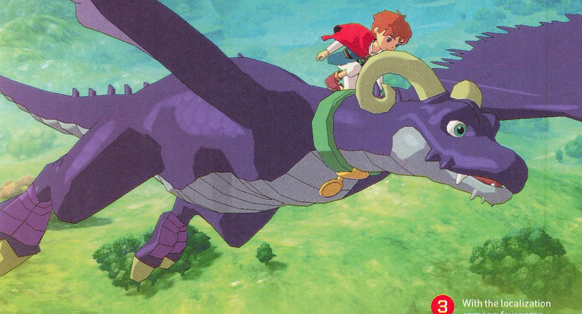
Something Evil for Everyone

With the goal of pleasing zombie-haters of all stripes, *RE6* features three separate, interwoven stories. Our demo focused on Leon's terrifying time in Tall Oaks, but Chris Redfield and newcomer/Albert Wesker offspring Jake Muller will face frights and firefights in other locales. The former will fill body bags in China, where all three protagonist's paths eventually converge, while the latter's narrative begins in Eastern Europe.

New protagonist Jake Muller's identity is no longer a secret.

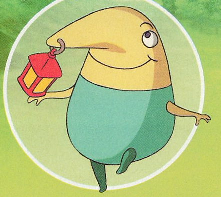
While Leon's stages are all about the scares, Chris Redfield's will reportedly take a more shooter-like approach.

Can any game *really* sustain scares with another player along? We'll have to wait and see.



① The legendary animators at Studio Ghibli are responsible for *Ni No Kuni's*, environments, characters, and fluid animation, but the game design is all Level-5.

② While the battles seem to mostly revolve around summoning familiars to fight for us, Oliver and his friends are capable of unleashing a few attacks of their own.



③ With the localization comes a few name changes. One of these is Drippy, who was originally known as Shizuku (which means "drip" in Japanese).

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Q1 2013** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Level-5**

Ni no Kuni

Wrath of the White Witch

Beautiful visuals, British accents, and one big angry pig tank

Pairing Japanese animation giant Studio Ghibli (of *Ponyo* and *My Neighbor Totoro* fame) with developer Level-5 (known for cel-shaded RPGs *Dark Cloud 2* and *Dragon Quest VIII*) seems like a guaranteed win, so we're pretty excited for *Ni no Kuni*. Telling the story of a boy named Oliver who discovers a magical parallel world after the death of his mother, it's just as vividly colorful, fluidly animated, and detail-rich as its pedigree suggests, and it's undergone a few changes since we saw it last.

Chief among these is the localization, which gives the characters wildly varying British diction meant to reflect the regional accents used in the Japanese version. We got an earful of it during our time with the game, which featured two locales: the walled town of Ding Dong Dell and its surrounding countryside, and the city of Hamelin, which can reshape itself mechanically and is home to armored pig people.

The area around Ding Dong Dell was a vast, freely explorable overworld map, filled with little monsters we were free to avoid. Like in previous Level-5 RPGs, combat was a mix of turn-based attacks and real-time movement, and we were able to switch instantly between Oliver and his (otherwise computer-controlled) friends, Esther and Swaine, and issue typical JRPG commands (attack, item, etc.) while lantern-nosed fairy Drippy shouted advice from the sidelines.

However, the *real* point of the battles is to call out the trio's familiars, little creatures that can be summoned one at a time to take a character's place in combat and deliver devastating magical and physical attacks.

The demo was capped off in Hamelin where, after wandering for a while and meeting the townsfolk, we were attacked by a big cartoon pig-tank called the Porco Grosso. Weak to lightning attacks, it was nonetheless an extremely tough opponent. We lost quickly, but the taste of defeat wasn't enough to keep us from wanting more.

MIKEL REPARAZ

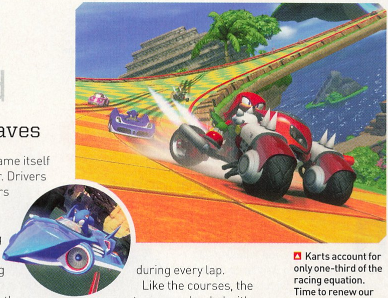
Can't Wait? Play this

Rogue Galaxy
(PS2, 2007)
Like *Ni no Kuni*, Level-5's space-pirate RPG features lush cel-shaded graphics and wide-open combat.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Holiday** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sumo Digital**

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed

Finally, a kart racer that's making waves



Karts account for only one-third of the racing equation. Time to renew our pilots' licenses!

It's a boat, it's a plane, it's all of the above! *Sonic & All-Stars Racing: Transformed* takes to the sea and the sky, adding two new vehicle types to the original game's tried-and-true kart-racing formula. At set points on every track, racers pass through gates that automatically transform (a-ha!) their vehicles into the appropriate craft as the high-speed action seamlessly carries on. And thanks to the brand-new physics systems, the boats and planes actually handle differently from the usual karts.

Despite the realistic tech working hard under the hood, the game itself remains as arcadey as ever. Drivers drift around colorful corners and over obligatory boost strips while performing minor stunts and collecting weapons like swarms of attack bees or heat-seeking missiles. The tracks seem especially vibrant this time: the *Super Monkey Ball* course weaves in riskier routes that lack guardrails and can send us flying into oblivion, while the *Panzer Dragoon* raceway features soaring dragons and giant worms that alter the track layout during every lap.

Like the courses, the roster comes loaded with Sega fan service. From *Jet Grind Radio's* Beat to *Skies of Arcadia's* Vyse to Sonic himself, we'll have lots of Sega mascots to pick from (and beat up in the soon-to-be-revealed arena mode). **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

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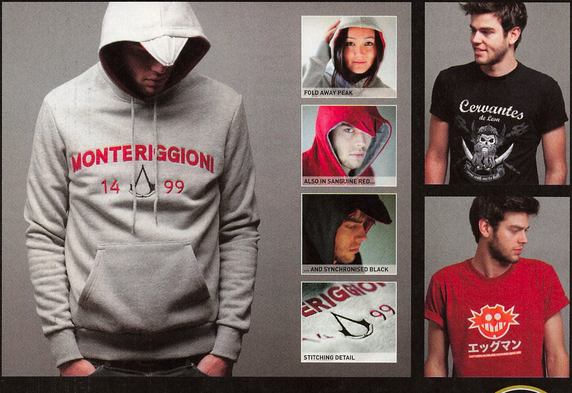

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HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Namco Bandai**

Tekken Tag Tournament 2

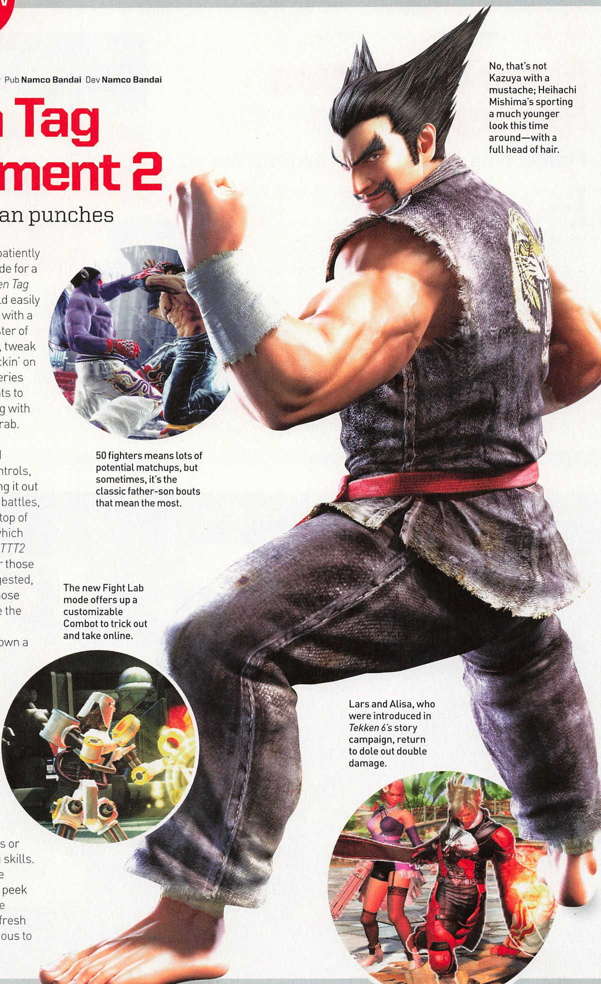
Packing more than punches

Given that fight fans have patiently waited more than a decade for a proper follow-up to *Tekken Tag Tournament*, Namco Bandai could easily have soothed their twitchy digits with a standard sequel; beef up the roster of brawlers, pretty up the paint job, tweak the controls, ship it, and get crackin' on *Tekken 7*. However, passionate series producer Katsuhiro Harada wants to reward *Tekken's* faithful following with much more than a quick cash-grab.

Make no mistake, *Tekken Tag Tournment 2* sports the expected eye-popping visuals, spot-on controls, and a line-up of 50 fighters duking it out in thumb-blistering two-on-two battles, but that's just the beginning. On top of the defining tag-team melees (which now allow for team-up attacks), *TTT2* introduces two-on-one fights for those feeling especially brave. As suggested, this mode pits a solo player—whose toughness is tweaked to balance the action—against a team of two.

More than the ability to beat down a pair of buddies at once, though, Harada's enthusiastic about *TTT2's* Fight Lab; not just another tacked-on tutorial, this mode introduces newcomers to the basics and allows seasoned pugilists to perfect their craft. The story-driven challenge sees players customizing a Combot—the ultimate combat robot, of course—while learning the ropes or honing their existing ass-kicking skills.

While our brief time behind the DualShock provided a satisfying peek at the title's signature fist-to-face action, it's the potential of these fresh offerings that's really got us anxious to get back in the ring. **MATT CABRAL**

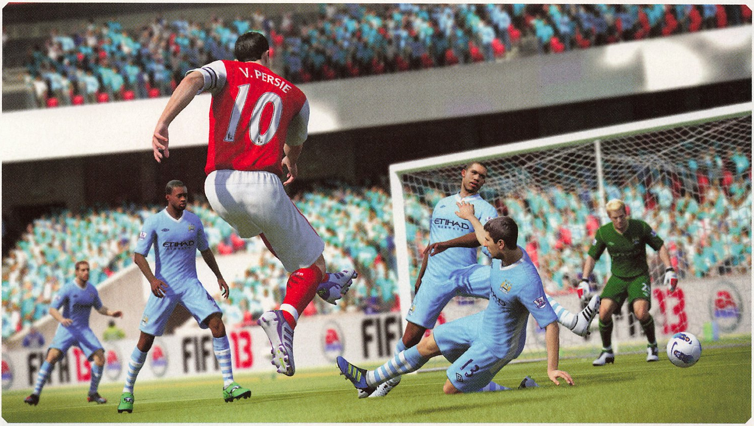


No, that's not Kazuya with a mustache; Heihachi Mishima's sporting a much younger look this time around—with a full head of hair.

50 fighters means lots of potential matchups, but sometimes, it's the classic father-son bouts that mean the most.

The new Fight Lab mode offers up a customizable Combot to trick out and take online.

Lars and Alisa, who were introduced in *Tekken 6's* story campaign, return to dole out double damage.



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

FIFA Soccer 13

Lots of new tweaks to keep the Beautiful Game beautiful

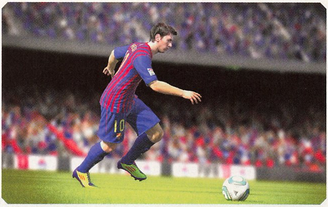
Last year's newly revamped *FIFA* engine added a lot of features to EA's venerable soccer franchise, and while *FIFA Soccer 13* doesn't look like another reinvention, it *does* look poised to refine many of *12's* finer points.

The biggest addition is a redone first touch, which adds more rebounding to the ball, meaning more skill is needed to maintain control. It also makes defending easier, since we can steal possession off misplayed bounces.

Speaking of defense, we'll have more opportunities to duel with players both on and off the ball to disrupt plays, and we can also throw ourselves in front of an attacker to get between him and the ball far more than we could in the past. Plus, there'll be more opportunities to cut off passing lanes, thanks to tweaks added to last year's Tactical Defending feature.

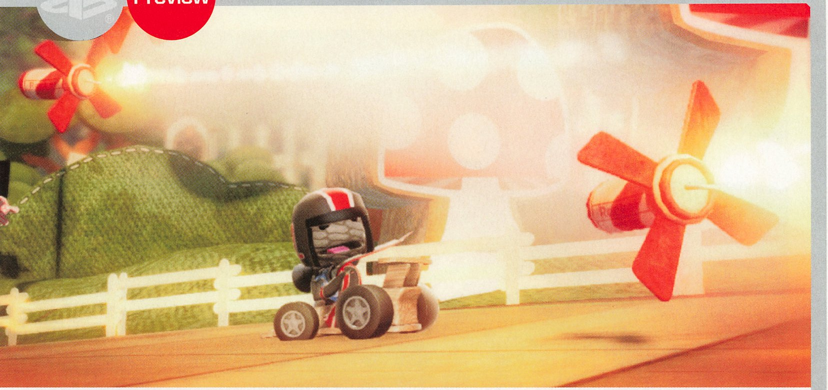
Better A.I. promises teammates who think two plays ahead and exploit space and positioning more efficiently, rather than standing around waiting to be activated as we go out on attack. The dribbling system not only allows for a few *FIFA Street*-inspired shifts while the ball's stationary, but also changes player positioning so that we can face goal even as we move the ball around laterally. Also, free kicks have new variances in the new Tactical Free Kick system, so when we're looking to shoot, we can dummy and trick our opponents.

Looks like there's plenty to look forward to as we head into a summer of trades, transfers, and speculation. **STERLING MCGARVEY**



▲ With massive improvements to a player's first touch and dribbling, we can step into Messi's cleats with even more ease.

▲ EA's looking to refine free kicks, so whether we're aiming for someone to head it in or shooting straight at the keeper, we'll have more options.

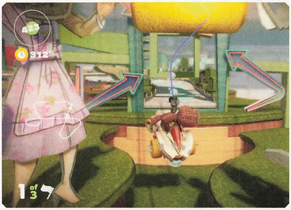


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **SCEA** Dev **United Front Games / San Diego Studio**

LittleBigPlanet Karting

Cuteness and carnage collide

We were a bit skeptical when *LittleBigPlanet Karting* was first announced—after all, wasn't *ModNation Racers* supposed to be Sony's kart racer? But our first spin in *Karting* revealed a blend of fun, charm, and personality that *Racers* never quite nailed. We sampled two tracks—Garden Grip and Future Perfect—that perfectly tapped the *LBP* platform games' style and gameplay for inspiration. The grappling ability feature allowed our Sackracer to soar across track gaps or launch higher to reach prize bubbles and access alternate routes. King's Castle, the third level in our demo sampler, offered up arena-style deathmatch action for up to eight players. We can't wait to take our Sacks to the track. **ROGER BURCHILL**



▲ In addition to grappling, *LBP Karting* retains the franchise's ever-popular slapfights. We love adding insult to victory.

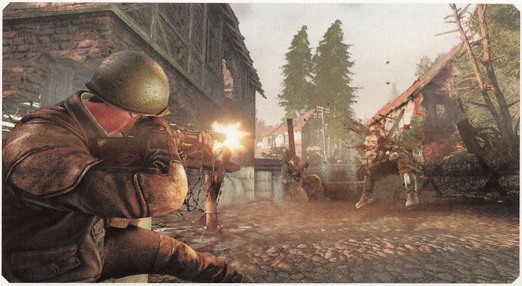
FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **TBD** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Giant Sparrow / Santa Monica Studio**

The Unfinished Swan

Jackson Pollock takes a Rorschach test

In development since 2009, Giant Sparrow's *The Unfinished Swan* has only recently come into focus. It's one of Sony's top-tier, first-party PSN titles, developed in the same Sony offices that previously housed another noteworthy studio: *Journey* developer Thatgamecompany.

Swan begins with a blank white screen. "We find players will spend about five seconds waiting to be told what to do, and then they start to panic," says lead developer Ian Dallas. When the trigger is eventually pulled, however, the first-person avatar launches a series of black paintballs. These splatter on any surface they make contact with, thereby



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Holiday** Pub **City Interactive** Dev **City Interactive**

Enemy Front

Shooting Nazis never gets old

Stuart Black, creator of frenetic PS2 shooter *Black*, seems to think World War II games have gotten a little too reverent. "I want to avoid a kind of *Saving Private Ryan* feel to the thing; the respect for our grandfathers' war, and the sacrifice," he says about *Enemy Front*, his upcoming WWII shooter, "and get back to the spirit of the old classic war movies of the '60s and the '70s."

Casting players as an American OSS ranger, *Enemy Front* takes a decidedly guns-blazing approach. Like in *Black*, walls and other cover objects can be shredded by gunfire, and there's a heavy focus on the firearms themselves—the sensation of firing them and what they can do to their surrounding environments. There's also an emphasis on player choice; Black says there'll be at least three ways to deal with any given situation, and we'll be able to tailor the experience by switching off things like regenerating health.

So far, we've seen two of the 11 levels: the evacuation of Dunkirk, in which the hero prowled around the bombed-out city and its gutted houses, picking off German troops on the way to destroying a rail-mounted cannon; and the Owl Mountains, where he battled Wehrmacht patrols following a plane crash. Both had a wide-open structure, with hugely varied terrain, out-of-the-way places to discover, plenty of destructible objects to (temporarily) dive behind for cover—and ample opportunities for the hero to drop curse-laden quips after every kill. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Shoot in Style

In addition to a pistol with infinite ammo, *Enemy Front's* protagonist can carry two rifles—a variety that includes some of WWII's more exotic and obscure armaments. *Front's* signature weapon is one of them: the Lanchester, a British-made submachine gun based on German designs and used mainly by the Royal Navy.

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illuminating the world on the fly, one dark splotch at a time.

Despite this being a game about exploration, we are, essentially, a little boy chasing a swan, whose footprints and trumpeting clue us forward early on. "We found that having this [clear objective] actually helped free players to go off of the critical path and explore," says Dallas. According to the dev, what's been shown is just a small piece of the experience, which will include "much more" than this single (but compelling) paintball mechanic.

"We're trying to create a world that has an undercurrent of not being safe for children," says Dallas. "When we looked at storybooks, our original goal was to create a space that evokes a sense of wonder." He says that the best ones created a place that the reader didn't feel safe in, which was a way to keep people engaged. "There's a part of the brain that never stops working if you feel like something might be ready to eat you." **EVAN SHAMOON**

Where the Hell is...

Prey 2 (BETHESDA SOFTWORKS)

With rumors of *Prey 2's* demise swirling, Bethesda has now confirmed that the sci-fi-themed open-world shooter has merely been delayed until 2013 to ensure its high quality.

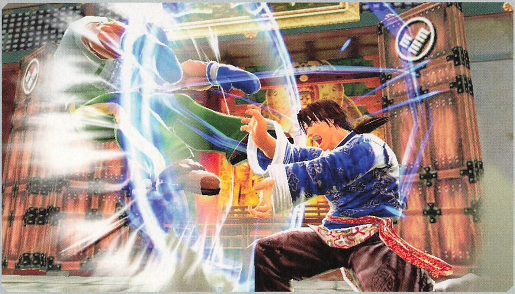
The latest on...

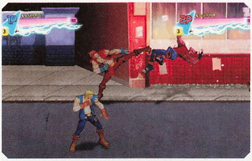
New shots, new games, new info

Street Fighter X Tekken

Format **PS Vita** ETA **Fall** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**

Two fighters, two franchises, and now two platforms: Capcom's tag-team crossover fighter *Street Fighter X Tekken* is headed to Vita complete with a dozen brand-new combatants, including fan favorites like Blanka, Sakura, and Christie. Not only will multi-platform players automatically unlock the new characters on their PS3s, Vita owners can square off against their PS3 brethren online, which looked perfectly smooth and synchronized during our real-time demo. The Vita version also exploits the system's unique functionality, adding rear-touch character-swapping and user-created "hot keys" on the front touch.

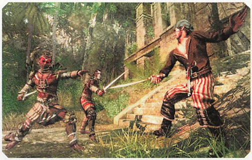




Double Dragon: Neon

Format **PSN** ETA **July** Pub **Majesco** Dev **WayForward**

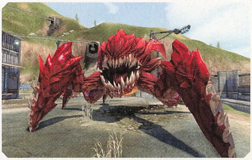
It's definitely still the '80s for the *Double Dragon* series. After a 17-year hiatus, the side-scrolling beat-'em-up returns as a digital download this summer, with more face-punching and, well, neon than ever. WayForward has a knack for 2D revivals, so we expect great things.



Risen 2: Dark Waters

Format **PS3** ETA **July** Pub **Deep Silver** Dev **Piranha Bytes**

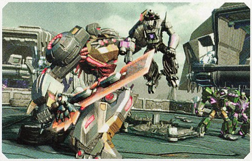
Release date ahoy! Or whatever it is pirates say. Console versions of open-world pirate RPG *Risen 2: Dark Waters* will arrive on shelves July 31, and will include The Air Temple DLC, meaning additional hours of swashbuckling, yo-ho-ho-ing, and rum. So much rum.



Defiance

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Trion Worlds** Dev **Trion Worlds**

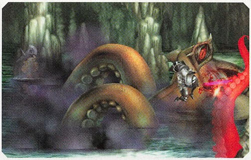
Both the *Defiance* MMO shooter and the Syfy show that it's scheduled to run concurrently with will have huge effects on each other. Events occurring in one version are expected to play a role in the other, although it is unclear exactly how deeply that crossover will run.



Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Format **PS3** ETA **August** Pub **Activision** Dev **High Moon**

As kids,we couldn't think of anything cooler than robo-dinosaurs, and the Dinobots were awesome incarnate. We now know we'll be able to play as Grimlock and other Dinobots in *Fall of Cybertron*. Yes, some childhood dreams do come true.



Dragon's Crown

Format **PSN** ETA **2013** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Vanillaware**

Dragon's Crown, a 2D co-op action-RPG with a colorfully stunning art style and PS3/Vita interoperability has changed publishers. Though still in the hands of Vanillaware, it will now be published and produced by Atlus for the Noeth American market.

Jill
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Assault Shotgun
ENEMY

Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection

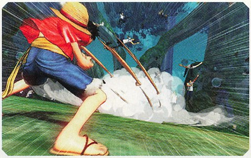
Format **PSN** ETA **June** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Cavia**

The Wii rail-shooters *Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles* and *Resident Evil: Darkside Chronicles* are on their way to PS3 via PSN. This HD collection will be Move-compatible, and will feature Trophies for all the hunters out there.

Tour de France 2012

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Focus Home Int.** Dev **Cyanide**

Due to its success in Europe, *Tour de France* is now pedaling its way to consoles in the U.S. *Tour de France 2012* will contain new teams, as well as a brand new multiplayer mode, allowing players to compete with other bicycling-enthusiast gamers around the world.



One Piece: Pirate Warriors

Format **PS3** ETA **Nov.** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Omega Force**

Just released in Japan in March, *One Piece: Pirate Warriors* blends *Dynasty Warriors*-style, man-versus-mob combat with flashy quick-time sequences and the anime series' unique, overtly goofy visual style. Its U.S. release has been confirmed for November.

SCAN IT!

http://bit.ly/JbRCDO

Star Trek: The Game

Format **PS3** ETA **Q1 2013** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Digital Ext.**

Star Trek news has been sparse, but a new trailer (scan the QR code to view) offers some tantilizing gameplay glimpses. Set after the events of the 2009 movie, the game features asymmetrical co-op starring Kirk and Spock in a fight to reclaim *Enterprise* from a new enemy.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲Viva la Worms! *Worms Revolution* is coming later this year to consoles and we can expect a class system for the first time in the franchise.

▲Bright Idea Three former *BioShock* developers have formed a new studio called "The Fullbright Company."

▲Dominating DLC Enter the Dominatrix, a new *Saints Row: The Third* DLC that includes aliens, is set to arrive this fall.

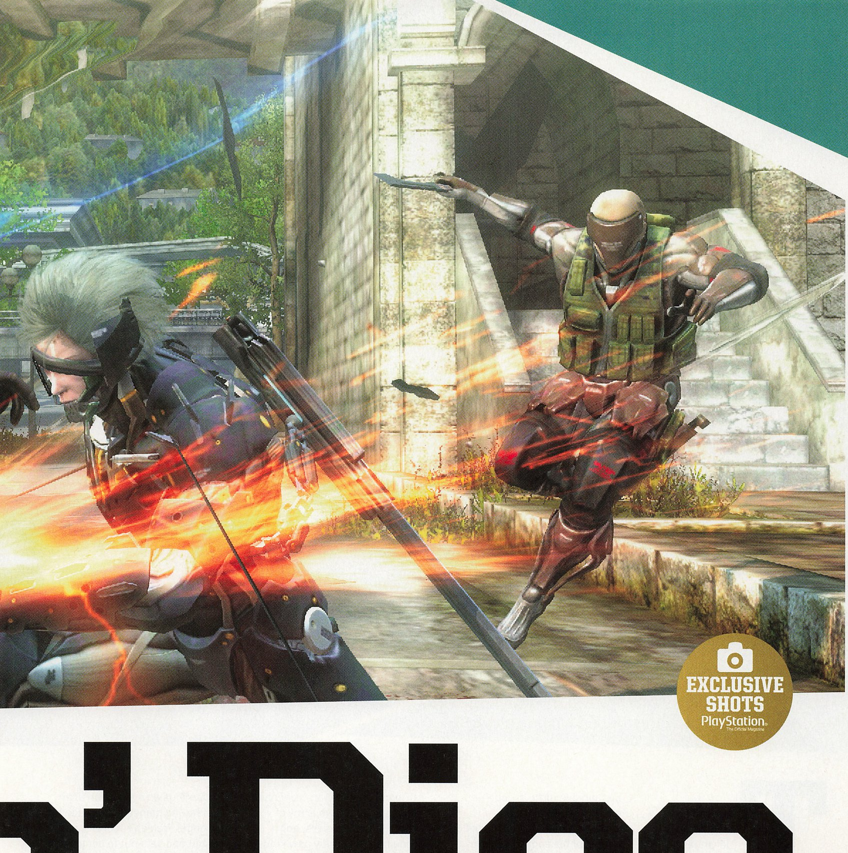
▼Still Here Idol Minds is off *Warrior's Lair* (formerly *Ruin*), but the Vita game is still in development.

▼MM-Nooo! MMORPG *The Elder Scrolls Online* is coming to PC and Mac, but not PS3.

▼Lost Souls It's official, the *Demon's Souls* servers will shut down on May 31.

Slice '

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance


EXCLUSIVE SHOTS
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

r'Dice

cuts through the clutter **By Mikel Reparaz**

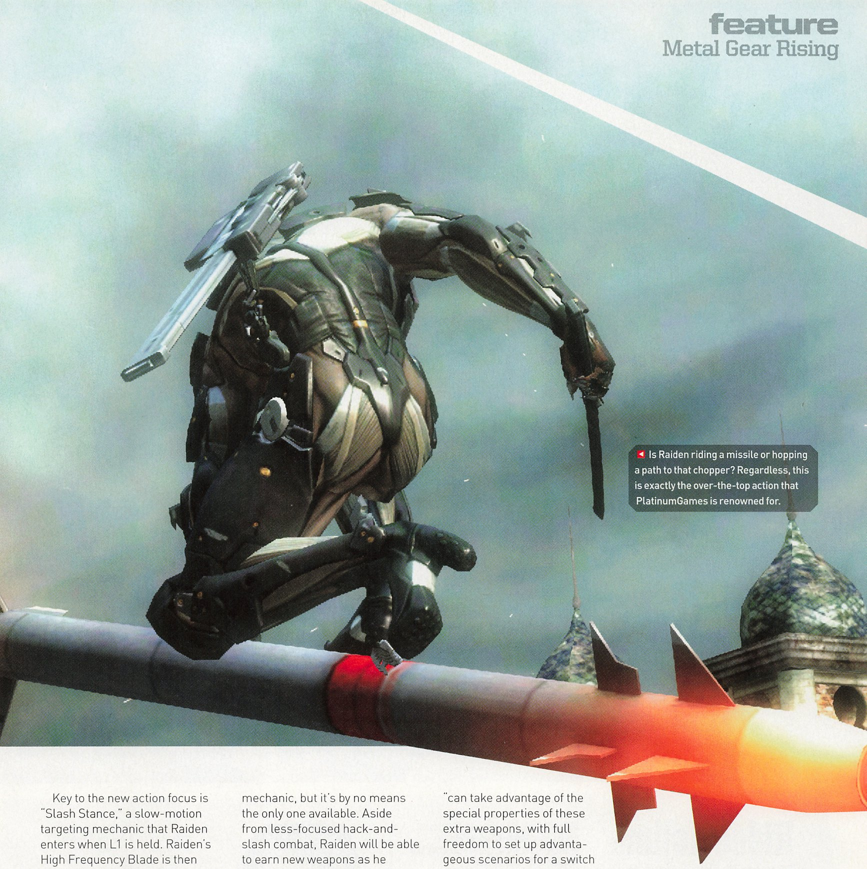
Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Konami** Dev **PlatinumGames / Kojima Productions**

The road to stardom is never easy, but it's been an especially rough one for Raiden. Following his surprise debut as the protagonist of *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, the former child soldier became the series' whipping boy, reviled by fans and openly mocked by his own creators in *MGS3: Snake Eater*. By the time *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* debuted, he'd been transformed into an unstoppable force of cool lethality—though it was something that took the sacrifice of most of his body to achieve. Even now that he's finally getting his own game again, it's not without a price, as he begins *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* by losing his left arm and left eye.

Set several years after the events of *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Rising* sees the colossal private military companies (PMCs) that dominated *MGS4's* story replaced by numerous smaller firms and criminal organizations. Cybergenetic technology has run rampant, enabling any renegade PMC to field its own army of cyborg super-soldiers, and giving rise to entirely new kinds of crime. And Raiden now works for a peacekeeping PMC named Maverick Security, which has been contracted to help rebuild a troubled African country.

Assigned to protect said country's prime minister, Raiden is soon ambushed by cyborg soldiers from an American PMC, Desperado Enforcement. Among Desperado's commandos is another cyborg ninja named Sam, who nearly kills Raiden. Now minus an eye and an arm (but having gained an appetite for revenge), Raiden recovers, gets rebuilt and sets out to destroy Desperado.

Revenge involves a lot of insanely fast action, as Raiden literally cuts his way through the cyborg legions standing between him and Sam. The stealth of previous *Metal Gears* is almost entirely gone, although *Rising* does retain what producer Yuji Korekado describes as "predatory stealth elements," meaning that Raiden can stealth-kill enemies for larger rewards.



Is Raiden riding a missile or hopping a path to that chopper? Regardless, this is exactly the over-the-top action that PlatinumGames is renowned for.

Key to the new action focus is "Slash Stance," a slow-motion targeting mechanic that Raiden enters when L1 is held. Raiden's High Frequency Blade is then swung freely with the Right stick, enabling us to dismember foes (leaving them disabled but alive), slice them to pieces, or aim for specific weak points on their bodies to kill them instantly. We'll then be able to rip out their batteries, using the "Zan-Datsu" or "Search & Seize" mechanic.

Freely slicing up enemies and objects with the High Frequency Blade is *Rising's* signature mechanic, but it's by no means the only one available. Aside from less-focused hack-and-slash combat, Raiden will be able to earn new weapons as he progresses through the game.

"After defeating certain boss characters, Raiden will obtain information about their weapons," says Korekado. "A tech expert who helps Raiden on his missions can then build and customize these unique weapons for him."

Slash Stance will be exclusive to the High Frequency Blade, Korekado added, although we "can take advantage of the special properties of these extra weapons, with full freedom to set up advantageous scenarios for a switch back to Slash Stance."

Additionally, Raiden will have several sub-weapons available, like rockets and grenades, which "can be used to create openings that allow you to move in for the kill," says Korekado. "There are also limited-use sub-weapons with incredible firepower, as well as several that will be very familiar to *MGS* fans."

It's a lot to take in, so we peppered Korekado with a few more questions—along with *Metal Gear* series creator Hideo Kojima, and (from PlatinumGames) producer Atsushi Inaba and *Rising's* director, Kenji Saito. After sifting through the info divulged by the dynamic duo of dev teams, a clearer vision of the canon-shifting game is finally beginning to emerge.

Hideo Kojima

Director, Kojima Productions

The legendary creator of *Metal Gear* needs little introduction, and while he isn't taking a direct role in *Rising's* development, he nonetheless had plenty to say about it.

Why pick PlatinumGames to complete *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*? Who approached who?

We approached PlatinumGames. We essentially came to a deadlock when our director at the time could not get the project moving forward. So we considered working with an overseas studio. At the end of the day, we want to develop only AAA titles that have strong global appeal to consumers, so we looked at all options.

However, considering that *Rising* is an action game with specific elements such as katanas and ninjas, we came to the conclusion that working with a Japanese studio on this particular project would be the best fit. PlatinumGames has a very good reputation in developing action games, and we believe that they can deliver a high-quality experience that holds internationally and maintains its identity as a Japanese game.

By having two leading Japanese game developers joining efforts, we're confident that we will not only deliver a game that appeals to a Japanese audience, but create a game that people all over the world will enjoy.

What do you hope Platinum will bring to *Rising*?

Thrilling, fast-paced action.

Originally, the basic concept of *Rising* was to design a title that enabled gamers to control a game experience that resembled the action seen from cyborg Raiden in the cutscenes in *Metal Gear Solid 4*. The team that was developing it internally may have been too tied up with the stealth elements of the original

Some of Raiden's bigger foes will be felled through quick time-like events, although these will be more than just an opportunity to hit buttons on cue.

MGS series, and weren't able to fully take advantage of the action elements. Which was one of the main reasons we partnered with PlatinumGames—we were confident they could change that.

Despite their somber tone, most *Metal Gear* games include at least some humor. Why include humor in games that are otherwise so serious?

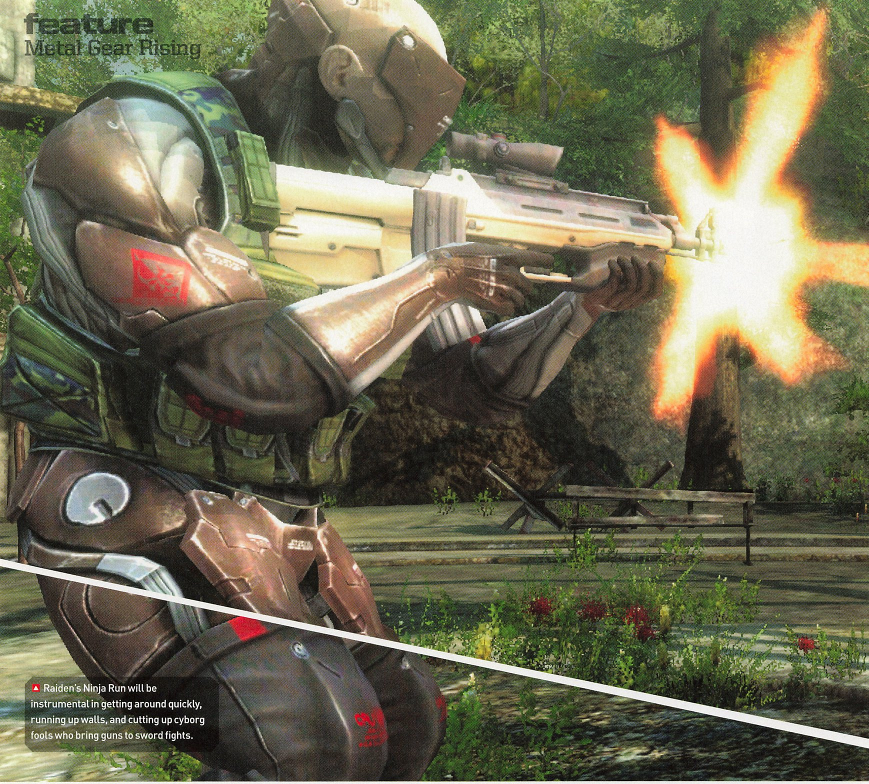
I believe that one of the most appealing features of a person is their sense of humor. No matter how serious a particular situation is, one must never forget humor.

Metal Gear Solid is a stealth game where the aim is to progress through the game without being noticed and has a very serious atmospheric approach. We believe that if the serious setting continues for too long, people will stop playing. To avoid that, humor plays the role of relaxing that seriousness. By integrating humor, it becomes easier to concentrate for a longer period of time.

Actually, Alfred Hitchcock uses this method.

What is it that continues to draw you back to *Metal Gear*? What keeps you interested in working on the franchise?

Well, the *Metal Gear* series is no longer only my creation. But one of the biggest reasons this series earned its popularity, and has been running for a long time, is because of the fans that have supported it. Creating more *Metal Gear* titles allows me to respond to the fans, projects such as *Rising*, a title that I'm not directing, is part of that challenge.

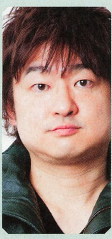


▲ Raiden's Ninja Run will be instrumental in getting around quickly, running up walls, and cutting up cyborg fools who bring guns to sword fights.

Atsushi Inaba

Producer, PlatinumGames

Previously known for his work on Capcom titles including *Devil May Cry*, *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*, and *Okami*, Inaba has been a producer on all of Platinum's games, including *Rising*.



What made you decide to take on development of *Rising*?

I made the decision to take the project the moment I realized Kojima-san was serious. I'd think about the rest later; I'd worry about scheduling *Rising* in amongst our other projects later. This wasn't an opportunity we could have pursued and achieved ourselves. Logic told me this would be a huge risk for PlatinumGames, but emotion and pure excitement won out. *Metal Gear Rising* is a project we undertook with "feeling" more than "thinking."

What does PlatinumGames bring to this project?

The fact that we're one of the best action-game developers in the world; this collaboration will leverage that strength to the maximum degree.

What do you think Platinum's involvement will mean for *Metal Gear* as a franchise?

We think we'll be able to breathe new life into the character of Raiden through our expertise in the action-game genre.

What's the goal of *Rising* as a project? What kind of game will it be?

We'd like to make it a spinoff *Metal Gear* fans can approach and enjoy from a fresh new perspective. If those *Metal Gear* fans become PlatinumGames fans once they've finished the game, nothing would make me happier.

As director of *Metal Gear Rising*, what kind of game design are you aiming for?

The major difference between *Rising* and previous games in the series is that we're going for a more aggressive design, with the player attacking enemies head-on.

This change relates to the game's story directly, in fact. We aim to pursue the fun of the action of cutting, without forgetting that the same action is taking the enemy's life. [Raiden's] a cyborg, so he can explore stages more freely while engaging in fierce battles. It'll be up to the player to use the Blade Mode feature to cut his enemies to ribbons, or take them out with more conventional methods. If previous *Metal Gears* were about "silence," I liken *Metal Gear Rising* to "activity."

What kind of impact does cutting freely have on battle and strategy?

The core concept of *Metal Gear Rising* is "slashing." In simple terms, the player uses a blade to cut an object to bits, with pinpoint accuracy in selecting where and how to cut. The ability to slash freely is the cornerstone of *Rising's* combat and strategy. For example, Raiden may encounter an obstacle he has to cut apart to advance, or he might slash a background object to topple onto an enemy in order to damage it. He can use Slash Stance to deliver the killing blow however the player wishes, and then Seize the cybernetic organs that spill forth from his target. Effective use of Slash Stance is at the heart of *Metal Gear Rising's* gameplay.

Kenji Saito

Director, PlatinumGames

Announced as *Rising's* director earlier this year, Saito previously worked as the lead programmer on *Bayonetta*, and was formerly part of Capcom's Clover Studio along with Atsushi Inaba.

Yuji Korekado

Producer, Kojima Productions

The lead programmer at Kojima Productions, Korekado has been a part of *Metal Gear Solid*'s development for over a decade, and took over as *Rising*'s producer late last year.

How does Platinum's version of *Rising* differ from the version you initially set out to create?

Ever since this collaboration started, the proposals from PlatinumGames would often have bold ideas that would never have come from Kojima Productions. A lot of the concepts delivered were fantastic, and made Raiden much more appealing.

Both of our studios hold a lot of pride in game development and have contributed strong ideas toward the overall creation of *Metal Gear Rising*. Sometimes our opinions would differ, but we often found that the best ideas were the result of us bumping our heads together.

***Rising* seems to feature more bloodshed and less stealth than *Metal Gear Solid* games. What inspired this change?**

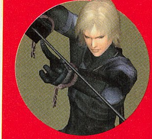
A big part of the inspiration for this game was to create a gaming experience similar to the cutscenes that featured cyborg Raiden in *Metal Gear Solid 4*–we wanted gamers to play out those cutscenes in *Rising*.

Nevertheless, several of the elements that we created for gameplay (such as Blade Mode and Zan-Datsu) actually inspired the theme of the story itself. There are some elements that might be somewhat over the top, but we believe that we were able to create a game that possesses high-speed action and tells a great story to support it.

Raiden had better enjoy that cool eyepiece while it lasts. It's going to be replaced by a decidedly more low-tech strip of cloth before he knows it.

Evolution of a Badass

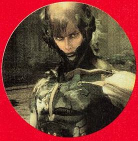
Raiden's been through a dramatic series of changes in the past 11 years. How dramatic? Let's take a look.



Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

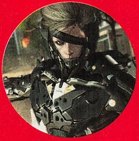
In his first outing, Raiden was a tough-as-nails secret agent. However, a lot of fans couldn't see past his androgynous looks, flowing blond hair, and inexcusable failure to be Solid Snake.

Popular or no, Raiden was every bit as capable and sneaky as his predecessor, although his pretty-boy exterior hid a tortured psyche and a talent with blades, something that played a big role in shaping his future incarnations.



Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

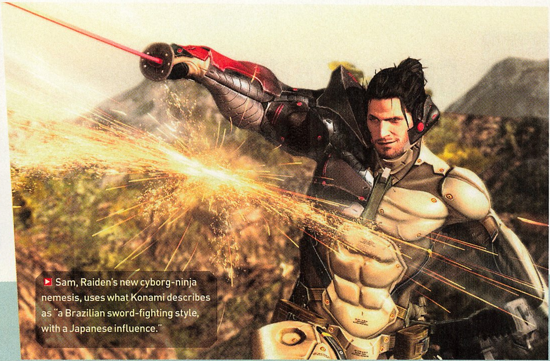
MGS4 marked a major turning point for Raiden, as he took on the mantle of *Metal Gear*'s cyborg ninja, thoroughly stealing the show in the process. For the first time, Raiden was tougher, colder, and considerably more capable than the aged Snake, although it came at a price: Captured by the shadowy Patriots, Raiden had had his spine and head (minus his lower jaw) removed and fused with a new, robotic body.



Metal Gear Solid Rising: Revengeance

While this iteration looks like it could be the same robot body he sported in *MGS4*, Raiden's new look is even more severe, adding armored plates, a more skull-like lower jaw and the seemingly permanent loss of his left eye.

While there doesn't seem to be much of Raiden's original body left to lose, he's apparently only gotten more powerful, able to lift and throw a formidable Metal Gear Ray before slicing it in half.



Sam, Raiden's new cyborg-ninja nemesis, uses what Konami describes as "a Brazilian sword-fighting style, with a Japanese influence."

With the new dev team and action-oriented direction, what's going to make *Rising* feel like a *Metal Gear* game?

The story, the world within the game, the visual aspects of that world, as well as the direction of the cutscenes. Remember that the game isn't solely being made by PlatinumGames. This is a collaboration; staff members from Kojima Productions are deeply involved and working alongside staff at PlatinumGames. Even if they look different from the outside, I believe it inherits the MEMEs that have been a constant in the *Metal Gear Solid* titles.

There was a dramatic shift in Raiden from *MGS2* to *MGS4*—what's his goal in *Rising*?

In the story after *MGS2*—the times have changed and the character has evolved. Regarding Raiden's goal and why he is fighting, that is something directly related to the core of the story. We don't want to reveal too much because the story progression plays a major role within the game. But I will say that the scenario writers from Kojima Productions, as well as designers such as Yoji Shinkawa, are actively working with the team at PlatinumGames to deliver a compelling story that is engaging to the players.

Originally, *Rising* was all about giving players total control of the blade and allowing them to slice absolutely anything. Has this changed?

The concept is more than just simply "cutting anything," we want people to enjoy "cutting freely." Players will not only be able to choose what to cut, but they can also choose how to cut things. You can aim at vital parts, or miss, or adjust the angle and aim at the cracks in the armor, or not aim at all and still cut. We put a lot of effort into this feature, and want people to enjoy the fun and thrill of "cutting freely" in the game.

20 INSANE TROPHIES

WE DARE YOU TO ATTEMPT

Because we don't have the time and we're not crazy.
Let us know how it goes at PTOM_letters@futureus.com

1

GOLD STANDARD

Game *Gran Turismo 5* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** SCEA > **Dev** Polyphony Digital > **Out** 2010

Requirement Get gold in every race, license test, and special event

License tests in the *Gran Turismo* series are always challenging, and getting gold in every race means literally hundreds of hours of driving. Though we can complete endurance races using our B-Spec drivers, there are no real shortcuts in the *GT* world, just single-minded driving perfectionism.

GOLD STAND

2

KNIGHT'S HONOR

Game *Dark Souls* **> Trophy** Silver **> Pub** Namco Bandai **> Dev** From Software **> Out** 2011

Requirement Acquire all rare weapons
One boss can yield three different rare weapons of the 50-odd total. That means we need to finish the game twice then complete a gruelling third playthrough on New Game++ to get them all.

3

SQUAT THRUSTING

Game *Fight Night Champion* **> Trophy** Gold **> Pub** EA Sports **> Dev** EA Canada **> Out** 2011

Requirement Get boxer level 60 in Online World Championship
Beating higher level fighters is rewarding, but there are hefty penalties for losing to a lesser ranking. Matchmaking prevents boosting with friends, so between single-punch knockouts and belligerent quitters, this Trophy is out of striking distance.

4

MASTER OF EDEN

Game *Child of Eden* **> Trophy** Gold **> Pub** Ubisoft **> Dev** Q Entertainment **> Out** 2011

Requirement Gold Star Clear rank all archives on Normal and Hard
Hit every single enemy while maintaining our multiplier to score over 800,000 points. Every. Single. Enemy. With missile bombardments, boss battles, and some erratic beat-matching, this is damn near impossible. At least it's pretty, right?

5

ALL MISSIONS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

Game *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* **> Trophy** Gold **> Pub** Tecmo Koei **> Dev** Team Ninja **> Out** 2009

Requirement Successfully complete all missions
It's not enough to be good—we need a friend who's just as skilled and committed as we are. Missions are played cooperatively, and the A.I. isn't good enough to get us through the harder difficulties. All we can do is recruit the strongest online partner possible and hope he's as patient as we are.

6 A GOD IS BORN!

Game *Catherine* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Atlus > **Dev** Atlus Persona Team > **Out** 2011

Requirement Conquer the final stage of Babel

The final stage of Babel mode requires ascending a whopping 279 randomly appearing blocks against the clock. We might as well climb Mt. Everest.

7 TURNTABLE PERFECTION

Game *DJ Hero* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Activision > **Dev** FreeStyleGames > **Out** 2009

Requirement Earn 5 stars in every mix on expert difficulty

The step up from Hard to Expert in *DJ Hero* is mountainous. It takes much practice, mad mixing skills, and plenty of luck.

8 METICULOUS COLLECTOR

Game *Team Ico Collection: Shadow of the Colossus* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** SCEA > **Dev** Team Ico > **Out** 2011

Requirement Acquire all items available in hard time attack

We have less time and additional weak spots to target when bringing down the Colossi on hard. We'll have to exploit glitches and the crazy Colossi physics, making this as much a test of luck as skill.

9 COMMITTED 'TIL THE END

Game *Lost Planet 2* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Capcom > **Dev** Capcom > **Out** 2010

Requirement Earn all the Good Job awards, items, and Career Levels

We need to unlock nearly 500 awards for this, though one stands out: "NUMBER 1"—for a world record time in a combat challenge. After two years, those times have been pushed to their absolute limit.

10 MY KUNG FU IS STRONGER

Game *Mortal Kombat* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Warner Bros. Int. Ent. > **Dev** NetherRealm > **Out** 2011

Requirement Gain Mastery of all fighters

It takes 24 hours of playtime with a fighter before the game considers us a Master. There are 28 fighters in total. Even tag-teaming two at once means it'll take a full two weeks of 24-hour play to earn this Trophy.

Need a break? Here are PS3's easiest Platinum Trophies

1 Megamind: Ultimate Showdown

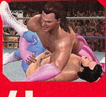
A kids' movie tie-in, this is a basic platformer set over just 10 levels. There are no collectibles, and though you need to defeat the four bosses without dying, they offer little resistance.

2 Terminator Salvation

One of the laziest Trophy lists ever. If we can cope with the tedium of just four enemy types, a single playthrough on Hard delivers a Trophy for finishing each of the nine levels, plus a further two on completing the game.

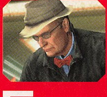
3 Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

Nabbing all the collectibles is a slight challenge, but almost all are in plain sight. By grinding the accumulation targets as we go, we can complete the game and collect all the Trophies in under five hours.



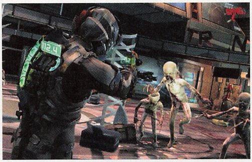
4 WWE Legends of WrestleMania

Clear two modes to complete the game and grab the Platinum. One recreates classic matches, and the other requires us to create a wrestler and rise to the top. Takes less than 10 hours.



5 NCIS

A point-and-click adventure with a handful of minigames, every Trophy in this TV spinoff is story related, and the game won't move on until you've received the award. Playing through all four episodes unlocks everything.



11 HARD TO THE CORE

Game *Dead Space 2* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Electronic Arts > **Dev** Visceral Games > **Out** 2011

Requirement Complete the game on Hard Core setting Not only does Hard Core difficulty disable New Game+ to prevent upgrades or weapons from carrying over, it also nixes checkpoints and gives you a meager three saves for the entire game. Ouch.

12 THE BLADDER OF STEEL

Game *Rock Band 2* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** MTV Games > **Dev** Harmonix > **Out** 2009

Requirement Complete the Endless Setlist 2 without pausing or failing The Endless Setlist consists of 84 songs which must be played back to back with no fails and no breaks. That's *six-and-a-half* hours of constant, perfect, relentless rocking out. Better pack an extra pick.

13 TRIAL ATHLETE

Game *Super Street Fighter IV* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Capcom > **Dev** Capcom > **Out** 2010

Requirement Be all-powerful! Clear all Trial Mode challenges! Every one of *SSFIV*'s 35 combatants has 24 challenges, making an eye-watering total of 840. They start easy, but it takes millisecond-perfect timing to clear the higher tier ones.

14 EXECUTIVE HONOR

Game *Warhawk* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** SCEA > **Dev** Incognito Ent. > **Out** 2007

Requirement Earn all in-game medals There are 23 medals to unlock, most of which have cumulative targets that will take weeks if not months to reach. Some also have targets of 20-30 kills in a single round—tough in the competitive *Warhawk* community where all but the very best players have moved on.

15 VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE

Game *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty HD* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Konami > **Dev** Kojima Productions > **Out** 2012

Requirement Complete all VR and Alternative missions With over 500 missions, brutal time limits, and no margin for error, we're looking at *thousands* of attempts before we can bring this baby home.

16 WANTED

Game *GTA IV* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** Rockstar > **Dev** Rockstar North > **Out** 2008

Requirement Achieve the highest personal rank in multiplayer Online Trophies are a dirty trick played on latecomers. To reach *GTA IV*'s top rank you'll need $5,000,000 in the bank—a long slog against griefers and quitters.

17 CONQUEROR

Game *El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** UTV Ignition Ent. > **Dev** Ignition Tokyo > **Out** 2011

Requirement Earn G rank in every chapter on hard Near-perfect runs on each of the 11 chapters are required to hit *El Shaddai*'s G rank. Our combos must be faultless and our platforming perfect. We can lose it all in a single fall, and it's often hard to tell a platform from a plummet.

18

MASTER OF TASKS

Game *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3* > **Trophy** Silver > **Pub** Capcom > **Dev** Capcom > **Out** 2011

Requirement Clear 480 missions in Mission mode

There are 48 characters in *Marvel vs. Capcom 3's* latest update and each one has 10 missions to complete. The best fighting gamers in the world tend to specialize in a few characters, but Master of Tasks demands we perfect the *entire* roster.

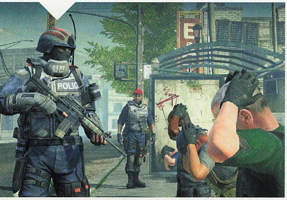
19

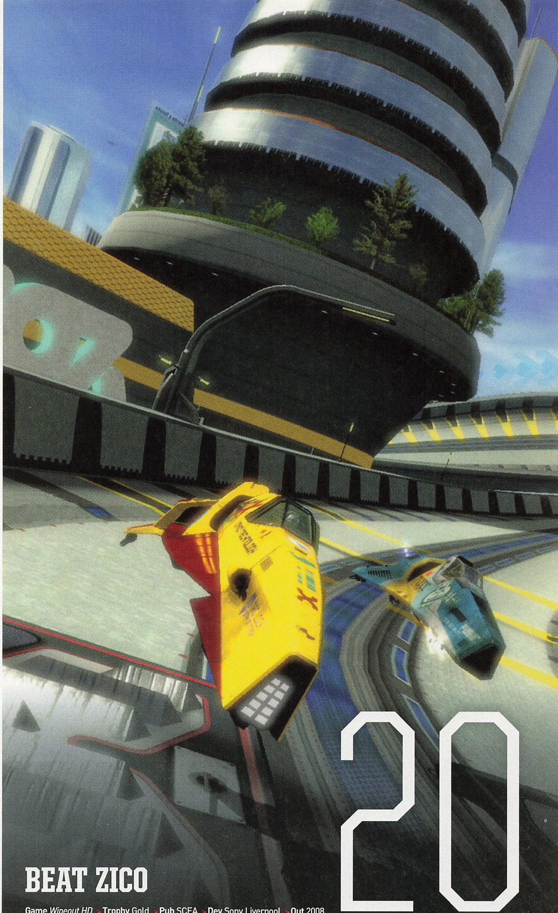
EXPERT OF WAR

Game *Homefront* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** THQ > **Dev** Kaos Studios > **Out** 2011

Requirement Complete all multiplayer challenges for weapons, drones, vehicles, and modes

This exercise in military completism requires 200 kills with 26 different weapons and five vehicles, winning 300 matches, and getting a 10 kill streak with each of the 12 main guns. Oh, and only public multiplayer counts. Good luck.





20

BEAT ZICO

Game *Wipeout HD* > **Trophy** Gold > **Pub** SCEA > **Dev** Sony Liverpool > **Out** 2008

Requirement Beat the 30.82 sec. lap time on Anulpha Pass (Forward)

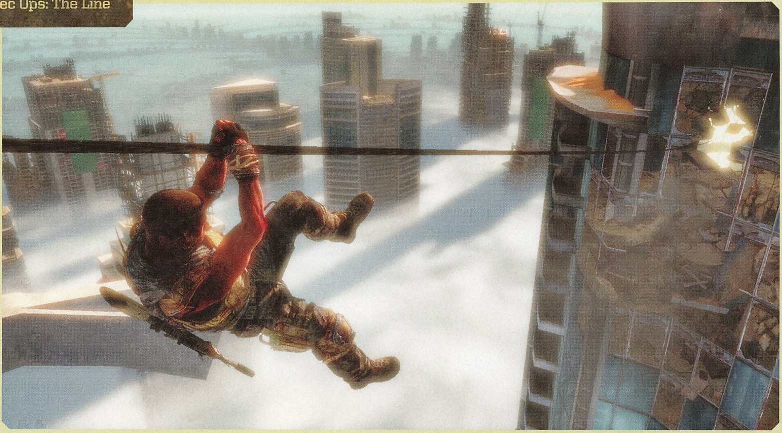
This isn't just demanding, it's a true test of how much we're willing to sacrifice for a Trophy. Beating Zico's lap time on this course is widely regarded as one of the toughest Trophies in PS3 history. Zico's lap is almost certainly the best of the best time from Sony Liverpool's QA testing team, and we'll need to play like a QA man to beat it. *Wipeout HD* has to become our *job*.

Can a videogame make an artistic statement? Can it challenge our preconceptions and genuinely shock us? Can it fundamentally alter our worldview? The developers behind grisly shooter *Spec Ops: The Line* certainly think so. In a candid, in-depth discussion, the core creative team gives us exclusive insights into gaming's own *Apocalypse Now!*

BY SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

NO HEROES

Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Yager Development**



▲ The ruins of Dubai not only provide a surreal backdrop for the story, but a wide variety of gameplay environments as well.

When a white phosphorous incendiary device explodes, it disperses a cloud of incandescent particles that cling to human skin and burn relentlessly unless completely deprived of oxygen. As the particles eat into the victim's exposed flesh, the phosphorous itself begins to enter the bloodstream, potentially causing multiple organ failure and significantly increasing the chance of mortality. The entire process takes less than a minute.

At one point during *Spec Ops: The Line*, we're given the option to unleash white phosphorous on a large group of rogue American soldiers. Should we choose to burn them alive, we must then walk through the grim aftermath, wincing at every agonized scream, every writhing body, every smoldering corpse. While it's tempting to dismiss this scene as a crass attempt to shock and offend, it's not as farfetched as we might hope. Though controversial, white phosphorous is still employed on the modern battlefield, even by the U.S. military.

"We're constantly affected by all the different things you read about modern conflicts," posits lead designer and co-creative lead Cory Davis. "A lot of the themes you see [in the game]—including white phosphorous—are things that are going on in the world, and we wanted people to know about them. Whether or not they like it is up to them, but we didn't want to shy away from those things. We wanted to pull them to the forefront and say, 'Hey, in this environment, this is probably what would happen here.'"

In many ways, this approach defines *The Line* as a whole. The game seems determined to present players with an unflinching depiction of the devastating consequences of modern military combat, especially the psychological toll it takes on those involved. In a genre where headshots, drone strikes, and knife kills have become banal, *The Line* looks to remind us that war truly is hell.

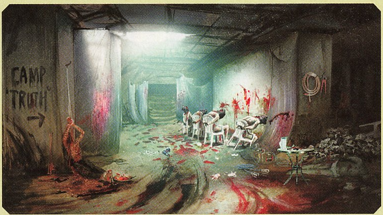
"A lot of the stories we hear about soldiers on the battlefield from our military adviser are heartwrenching, in part because there's not a clean outcome to the majority of these conflicts," explains Davis. "In *Spec Ops*,

after combat there are going to be enemies bleeding out and in pain, and we want the player to sort of be surprised by that and have to internalize how he's going to approach those things throughout the game."

HEARTS AND MINDS

In contrast to this commitment to emotional authenticity, the premise and gameplay both err on the side of fiction. Rather than ripping its story straight from the headlines, *The Line* sets its narrative in the offensively opulent city of Dubai, following a massive sandstorm that's left hundreds of people stranded. After his mentor, Colonel John Conrad, leads a battalion on an unsanctioned (and unsuccessful) evacuation mission, Captain Martin Walker and his two squadmates are sent to assess the situation and, if possible, recover the colonel. Unfortunately for Walker, the story skips straight over *Saving Private Ryan* and instead tumbles headlong into *Lord of the Flies.*

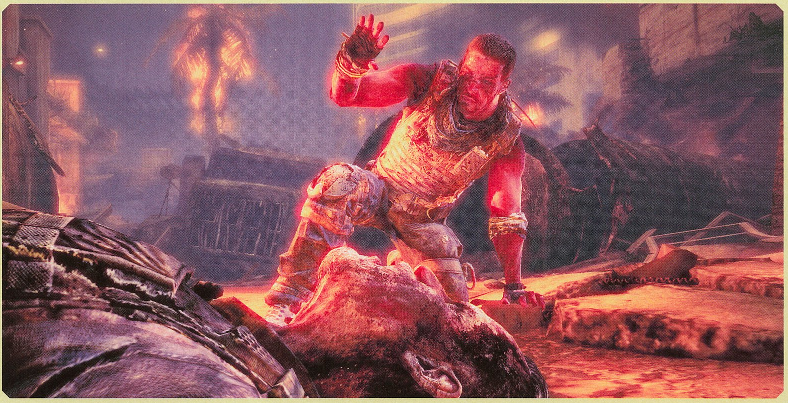
While not a biting, topical commentary on a subject like the War on Terror, this setup does provide a fertile ground for Walker's emotionally taxing ordeal. "This particular journey these guys are on is really disconnected from those global conflicts, and we have an opportunity to explore their personal feelings and emotions throughout this journey," emphasizes lead writer Walt Williams. He adds that the story is largely a "journey into self,"

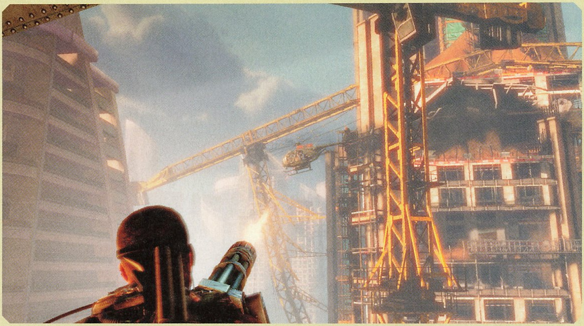


▲ *The Line's* premise could easily be compared to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, but the devs maintain that their game is more focused on the journey.

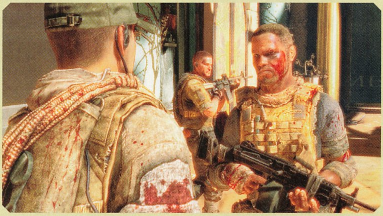
"We hope the player feels a very visceral response to the things he's seeing, and if those things cause him to say, 'I can't progress further,' then we've done something great, I think, because he's not going to have any choice but to reflect on that."

Cory Davis
Lead Designer, Creative Lead





▲ The game opens with a fairly standard rail-shooting section, but expands out from there to create a far deeper experience.



and that while "Conrad is a goal in a sense, in many more ways he's simply the catalyst of events surrounding these characters."

Because the game focuses on, as Davis puts it, "the human side of the battlefield," most of the attention is paid to the relationship between Walker and his comrades and the ways in which they attempt to cope with the violent insanity that's thrust upon them. As you might expect, things don't go so well. The playful banter of the first mission is gradually replaced by cold professionalism and eventually outright hostility as the chain of command begins to break down. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the fact that we'll be able to very directly observe the change in Walker's psyche as the game progresses.

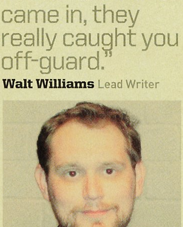
"We wanted to explore the devolution of the mental state of a soldier after he's had command stripped from him and all of the sort-of positive aspects of his career go away, and he's forced to find a way to survive and live with those decisions he's made," states Davis. "You're not going to be fighting in space or something at the end. There's not going to be sandworms or something like that. But this element of psychological horror is something that becomes more and more pervasive the further you get into the game."

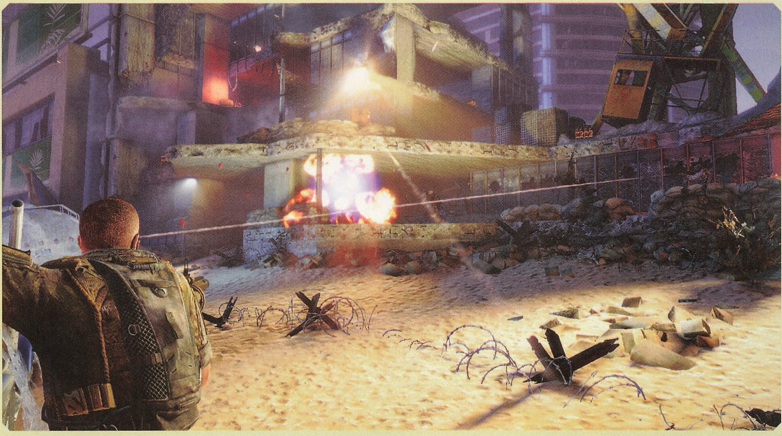
HEAD GAMES

In other words, the game will subtly but deliberately start to mess with our heads. At one point in the campaign, for example, we're told to either put a man out of his misery or simply let him burn to death under a flaming fuel truck (don't worry, he brought it on himself). If we walk away and let the fire consume him, not only will his desperate pleas follow us, we'll actually see two burning statues just off in the distance. When we reach them, however, they'll just be regular old statues, forcing us to wonder if we really saw what

"We wanted you to feel comfortable and let your guard down a little bit so that when the more horrific elements came in, they really caught you off-guard."

Walt Williams Lead Writer





▲ As a commanding officer, Captain Martin Walker can never look away... even if it will haunt him forever.

we *think* we saw.

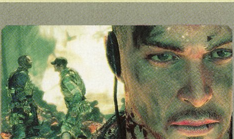
At another point, we actually discovered a living, almost glowing olive tree in a courtyard, a truly surreal sight in a city inundated with millions of tons of sand. Yet, after we explored the area and briefly returned to the tree, it was completely withered and dead—a literal but nonetheless ominous metaphor. Like that tree, much of the game seems constructed to quietly reinforce this atmosphere of oblique surrealism, from the soundtrack—which, at parts, features licensed tracks played over a citywide sound system by a demented DJ—to Dubai itself.

"It's a real-world Rapture, and that's the perfect setting for what we're trying to do here and to approach those universal themes about humanity—fragile, but also super powerful," explains executive producer and co-creative lead Francois Coulon, referencing *BioShock's* underwater dystopia. Imagine taking cover behind a million-dollar sports car or suddenly encountering a flock of pink flamingos (which, yes, Dubai actually does have). The jarring juxtaposition of the game's searing violence and Dubai's affluence run amok and shapes the entire experience: Mowing down former allies to the tune of *Magic Carpet Ride* while surrounded by crumbling marble and shattering crystal feels deeply, deeply unsettling.

BURIED ALIVE

Eventually this surreality even seeps into the gameplay in some very tangible ways that, at the developers' urging, we won't spoil here. Aside from these moments of insanity, though, *The Line's* action should feel largely familiar. The standard third-person shooter mechanics are all here: snap-to cover, regenerating health, over-the-shoulder aiming, melee kills, weapon swapping—the works. And with its tight, linear level design, even the momentum of the moment-to-moment gameplay conforms to usual shooter flow.

The one major twist, of course, is sand. Millions and millions of tons of sand. "You're able to crush enemies with sand, or stun them with sand shooting into their eyes from frag grenade explosions, or even using that element of unstable ground

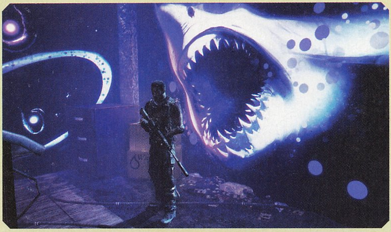


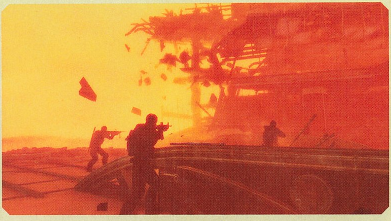
GO IT ALONE

A third-person shooter starring a three-man squad...and there's no co-op? What gives? Executive producer Francois Coulon explains: "As far as co-op is concerned, we thought about it before, but we had to face some unsolvable problems if we wanted to prioritize a very dark, mature narrative here, and that's what we did."

"When I play co-op games, honestly, I'm skipping every cutscene even if I haven't seen them," adds lead designer Cory Davis. "I'm f—king around with the geometry in the levels, I'm teabagging my buddy, things like that. You probably can have an interesting narrative experience with a friend, but that's not the thing we set out to do."

"I think a lot of the time, we sort of fall into the trap of thinking if we don't have all those checkboxes checked, we won't be a successful game. I don't think that's true at all. I really feel like the developers who make strong, bold decisions regarding the places where they put their focus, those are the games that are successful and that are able to do something new."





▲ The overwhelming sandstorms that crop up over the course of the campaign look spectacular and affect the gameplay. The grenade aim indicator, for instance, disappears as visibility starts to diminish. Melee kills become a better option.

against them when enemies are walking on top of glass roofs, shooting that down and having them fall into the environment," enthuses Davis, who doesn't even mention the sudden sandstorms that can engulf the world and change both the gameplay and the atmosphere.

"Obviously, gameplay-wise, we're not shooting for a simulation," confirms Williams, "but we wanted to put the players more in a mode where they were thinking about the consequences of pulling a trigger. It's about putting players into a shooter and allowing them to feel something. We wanted to create an emotional space for the player to explore that would allow them to open up their own personal questions in the space, and then let them find their own answers to those questions."

THINK AGAIN

A major part of that process comes in forcing us to make difficult, split-second moral decisions like those in the white phosphorous scene. Unlike other games, however, *The Line* doesn't ask us to hit X for one option and Square for another. Instead, it simply presents a situation and then lets us do whatever we want, whether it's burning everyone alive, attempting to shoot our way through, or hoping we're able to sneak past undetected. And most importantly, there is no karma meter—the game will never validate or condemn our decisions.

"I think with games we are very trained to the game saying, 'This is what you have to do. You've accomplished this. Good for you, you're a winner.' Instead, we put a situation before you and you accomplish that and we let you live with that. It's over. Keep going. We're not going to tell you anything about whether what you did was good or bad, necessarily, and maybe in these situations you have to just kind of think on it," says Williams. "We hope that gamers sort of have to stop and realize that we want you to do what *you* want to do."

Still, the question remains: Isn't the unrealistic gameplay in direct conflict with the narrative's gritty, psychological themes? "There was a point in time where we had the gameplay and the combat be much more realistic and a bit more like a simulation, and honestly, you couldn't even get through it," warns Williams. "You'd get like six missions into the game, and with the emotional weight of both the narrative and the realistic combat, you were just emotionally and physically exhausted. You couldn't go through it anymore."

SEMPER FI

From our hands-on time, we know exactly what he means. One of the toughest moments we faced came, unexpectedly, from overhearing two guards while sneaking through a building. Both were American soldiers—members of Conrad's deeply

"I think we have some sort of responsibility not to glorify war and not to glorify the violence, and that's what we're doing here."

Francois Coulon
Executive Producer, Creative Lead

divided squadron, embroiled in some kind of murky civil war—and as they shared a pack of gum, they joked warmly about their fellow soldiers and vulnerably expressed their homesickness. Unlike most game's enemies, these guys were relatable. Hell, they were *likable*. But in Dubai, it's kill or be killed. When they eventually detected us and immediately opened fire, we *had* to kill them to progress.

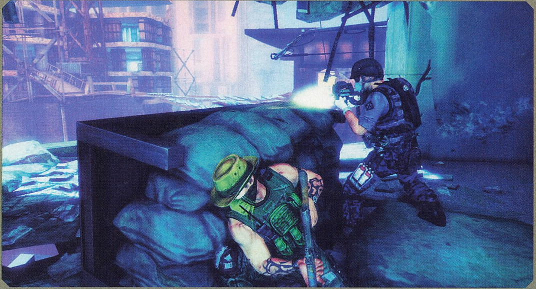
On some level, we resented being forced into a situation like that. But according to Williams, it's all a part of the game. "In a lot of ways, we hope that [these situations] push players forward. We almost want them to be angry at us for the road we have given them to walk down, and hope that drives them to keep going down to ultimately finish this, to get to the end and digitally spit in our face."

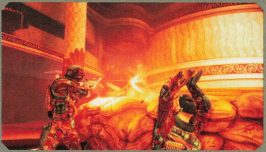
This of course raises another important question: "Do people want to sit down and play a videogame that's not going to make them feel awesome?" asks Williams, beating us to the punch. "Ultimately, we decided absolutely yes. Think about the movies we watch, the books we read, and the music we buy. We, as a culture, explore our emotions through our art—the emotions we may not want to feel on a daily basis because of the events happening in our lives. We use our art to let us feel these emotions in a safe environment, and ultimately, in videogames, we thought it was time to broaden that."

THE ROAD AHEAD

This, to us, seems a very telling statement, as it reveals the developers' ultimate intentions for creating an experience like *The Line*, intentions that Williams was happy to discuss: "War brings up all of the big, kind-of rough emotions for us in the real world, but in videogames, it's just the cheap, easy popcorn entertainment, and those are two very different things. We felt it was time that war in videogames kind of explored what war in films started to explore back in the '70s and '80s, with movies like *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Apocalypse Now!* Suddenly war films were no longer just John Wayne coming in and punching the Nazis. It was brutal. It was real. You saw young people die. You saw war kind of be aimless, and we started to have a bigger sense of that. We just felt it was time to have that in games."

"We didn't feel like we needed another take on a heroic American military experience," agrees Davis. "There are people who are doing that very well. [We] really wanted to push the boundaries of storytelling in a modern shooter. This industry can develop mature stories, and that's what we tried to do here."





PARALLEL LINES

Though *The Line* eschews co-op, it does offer a full competitive multiplayer suite. Created by Darkside Game Studios (the same minds behind *BioShock 2's* underappreciated multiplayer), the action delivers team-centric, four-on-four matches set in maps tailored for intimate, close-quarters combat. Needless to say, teamwork is *strongly* encouraged.

As expected, multiplayer features a robust class-based leveling and upgrade system, but it also utilizes *The Line's* unique sand effects, littering every map with deadly sand traps and occasionally interrupting matches with a massive sandstorm. In our time with the game, we found the aiming to be a bit finicky, but the fast-paced Rally Point mode—which forces teams to locate and protect a random point that changes every 45 seconds—was remarkably involving nonetheless. The team dynamic really shined through, and the sand, as expected, provided a handful of deeply satisfying kills.

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PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

We will likely never be able to see the final frontier for ourselves, or ride on the backs of griffins, or leap from the top of the Empire State Building without dying. But when we play games, we can pretend. We can journey to the edge of space and play Cowboys and Indians in the stars, and we can fight wars using futuristic technology.

Games offer a universe of possibilities, and with all that's been created, we've still just barely scratched the surface. To say there are no new ideas would mean human beings have become stagnant and our imaginations just can't stretch any further—that is simply not true.

There will always be room for new ideas, but that doesn't mean the old doesn't belong anymore. Sometimes we are presented with stories we already know told in new ways, with new characters and locations to explore. These require just as much thought and creativity as coming up with something completely different.

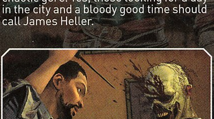
In this month's issue we celebrate the creativity and imagination of games. Because where else can we slow time and dodge bullets or fend off zombies without enduring the apocalypse?

PROTOTYPE 2

It's gore galore in *Prototype 2*—glorious, chaotic gore. Yes, those looking for a day in the city and a bloody good time should call James Heller.

DRAGON'S DOGMA

We thought riding on the backs of giant mythical creatures would be a dream come true, but *Dragon's Dogma* turned out to be sort of a nightmare.



THE WALKING DEAD

We love the comics, we love the show, and gosh darn it, we love the game too. The art style, the decisions, the drama—the whole undead package was made for fans of the series. And to think, this is only the first of five installments...

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

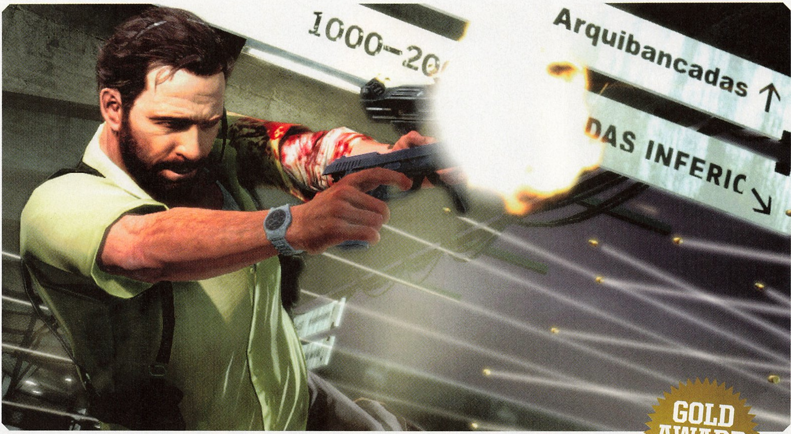
3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

Max Payne 3

A slow-motion, guns-blazing leap out of retirement

Info

PS3
MAX PAYNE 3

Format PS3
Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like being caught in nightmarish situations, and loving it.

It's been a long time since Max Payne last blazed his way through a shooter, and in the intervening years, things have gone from bad to worse for the ex-DEA-agent-turned-renegade-cop. Now working as a bodyguard for a rich family in São Paulo, Brazil, Max has degenerated into a flabby, depressed, middle-aged alcoholic who spends most of his waking moments in a whiskey-induced haze. His internal monologues, once dripping with overwrought noir-speak, have become heavy with a caustic mixture of self-pity and self-loathing. And his relentlessly awful luck now seems joined with an almost willful tendency toward incompetence and failure.

So it's surprising that this version of Max turns out to be much more than just another *Kane & Lynch*-ian lowlife who likes shooting things. In fact, for all the times his behavior made us want to stage an intervention, he still comes across as genuinely likable. In spite of his repeated failure to do so, we *want* Max to succeed, to get better, and to redeem himself, partly because, deep down, it's what *he* wants. And that desire—along with Max's superhuman abilities, a lot of tightly designed gun battles, and some incredibly satisfying violence—is a big part of what makes *Max Payne 3* such an engaging shooter.

Weapons Free

At first, *Max Payne 3* doesn't appear to deviate hugely from the series' old formula. Using a variety of conventional firearms, Max blasts his way through fairly straightforward, mostly

Timeline The rise, fall, and rebirth of Max Payne

2001

Max Payne
(PS2)
The original introduced gamers to bullet time and brought a stylish, action-movie sensibility to shooters.

2003

Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne
(PS2)
Despite the misleading title, this noir love story was Max's finest hour—at least until now.

2003

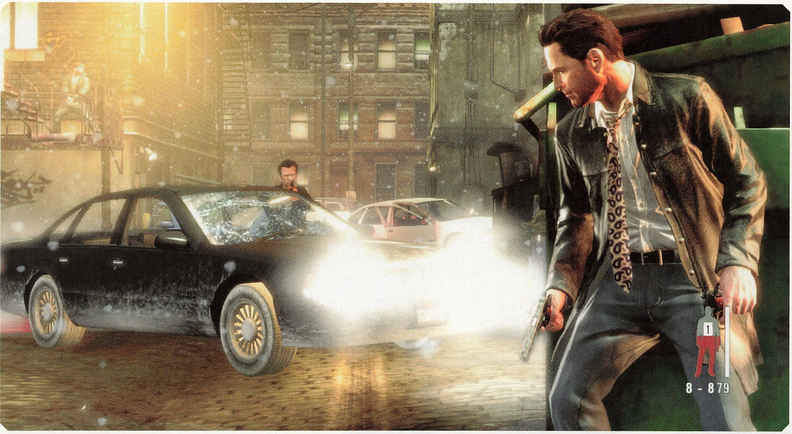
Max Payne
(Game Boy Advance)
Just after *MP2* came this isometric port of the first game, which was...surprisingly okay.

2008

Max Payne
(film)
The Mark Wahlberg movie version, however, was surprisingly boring and not-so-surprisingly forgettable.

2012

Max Payne Mobile
(iOS/Android)
Just ahead of *MP3* came another portable port, this one touchscreen-enabled.



▲ Max's new ability to stick to cover points comes in handy when shooting cars until they explode.

linear environments filled with angry goons of varying ability and toughness. Bullet time is once again a key part of gameplay, enabling Max to aim, fire, and reload at normal speed while the world around him slows to a crawl. And bullet time wouldn't be complete without Max's signature shootdodge, which lets him dive gracefully in any direction and aim in 360 degrees as the bullets go whirring past.

Max Payne 3 brings plenty of modern touches to the table, though. One of these is sticky cover, which might be tempting for seasoned players to ignore but is nevertheless extremely useful when Max is surrounded by armored, upper-echelon thugs. There are plenty of dramatically staged, slow-motion set pieces, too, which let Max do things like target and blow up incoming RPGs while dangling from a helicopter or gun down hapless squads of gangsters while the structure he was hiding on top of collapses. There's a slo-mo "Bullet Cam" feature that lets Max perforate the last enemy in a group in a hilariously gruesome display—and if the bad guys get too close, Max can gun-bash them a couple times before blowing them away at point-blank range.

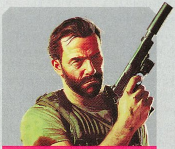
Shot Down Like A Dog

The most surprisingly satisfying addition, however, is Last Man Standing. Unlike heroes in most modern shooters, Max's health doesn't regenerate automatically, meaning we need to constantly scrounge for painkillers—Max's drug of choice—scattered in medicine cabinets and out-of-the-way corners in each of the game's 14 levels. If he's got at least one bottle in stock when an enemy delivers a killing blow, Last Man Standing kicks in, and Max automatically enters bullet time as he falls to the floor. In the space of a few seconds, he needs to find his "killer" (the game helps by nudging the reticule in the culprit's direction) and blow him away, which partially refills Max's health and takes an enemy off the board in a vividly gruesome fashion.

And make no mistake: it *is* gruesome. Gunshots in *Max Payne 3*

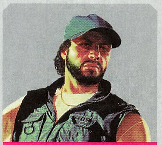
Caught In the Crossfire

Who's on our side?



MAX PAYNE

More depressed than ever, the hard-bitten hero gradually shifts from his familiar look to one that's more bald, bearded, and badass.

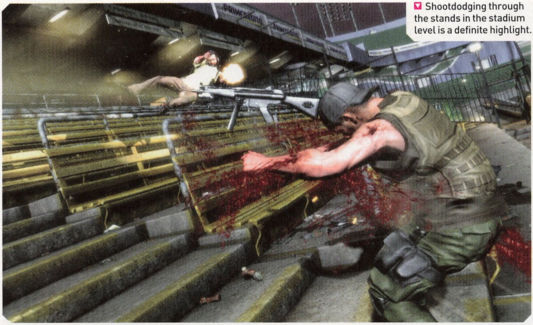


RAUL PASSOS

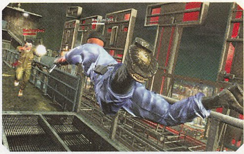
Max's new partner, Raul introduced him to the Brancos and backs him up through much of the game.

FABIANA BRANCO

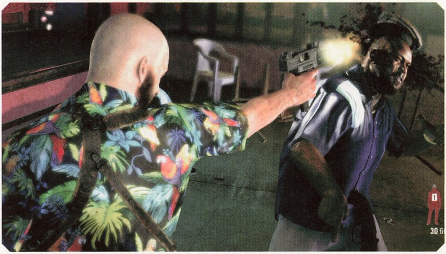
The trophy wife of Max's new employer, seeing her kidnapped becomes Max's driving force for much of the game.



▼ Shootdodging through the stands in the stadium level is a definite highlight.



▲ Bullet time and shootdodging are carried over into multiplayer, but they're handled a little differently.



In spite of his repeated failure to do so, we *want* Max to succeed.

tend to leave three different kinds of effects on victims' bodies: ominous-looking blood splatters, little bloody exit wounds, and huge, ragged craters that spray jets of gore as enemies take multiple headshots during kill-cam moments. It's a little disturbing, but also a rewarding way to see enemies eat it.

In addition to all those new touches, we have our choice of three different aiming systems: hard lock, which stays locked on as enemies move; soft lock, which automatically zips the reticule to enemies when L2 is pulled but doesn't track them; and free aim. While the first two are useful for getting a feel for the game and the rhythms of its combat, sticking with them ultimately makes *Max Payne 3* too easy. Even worse, it defeats half the purpose of bullet time (which is to make aiming easier). Picking free aim isn't just more difficult, it's much more rewarding. In any configuration, though, it's possible to be just as accurate shooting from the hip as it is zooming in to aim, and there's no loss of accuracy while Max is moving. This isn't terribly "realistic," but lining up a perfect headshot while charging recklessly at a gang of killers is a rare thrill.

City Lights

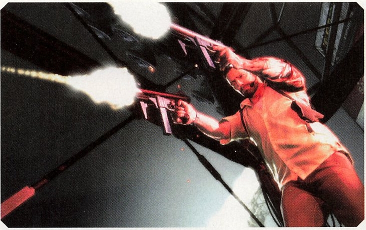
While the shooting is smartly designed and addictive, it's far from the only thing that makes *Max Payne 3* appealing. Rockstar's vision of São Paulo is that of a violent metropolis where the ultra-rich stand a stone's throw from the desperately poor, but it still manages to be vibrant in spite of its bleakness. It also offers up plenty of interesting collectibles to find and places to explore, including a sprawling, almost mall-like soccer stadium with stands that are perfect for diving down and an obligatory trip through the favela, which carries a cramped, desperate urgency as Max cuts a bloody swath through one local gang after another. Much of the dialogue is in Portuguese (meaning no accented "Keel the American!" battle chatter), and it's all supported by an unforgettable score from the band Health, with eerie tracks that sound like John Carpenter music infused with samba.

The Rotten Underbelly

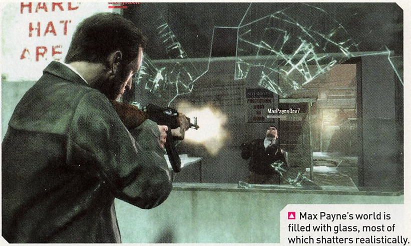
It's a surprisingly sunny departure from *Max Payne's* previous dark, wintery vibe, but there's plenty of that, too, with several flashback segments that show how Max, with the help of new buddy Raul Passos, wound up leaving his comfortably self-destructive existence in New Jersey to play bodyguard for the sketchy Branco family. Whether in New Jersey or São Paulo, the story's pretty involving, and while it might be difficult at first to care about Max's attempts to rescue his vapid, kidnap-prone employers, the plot's focus gradually becomes much wider

Want more?

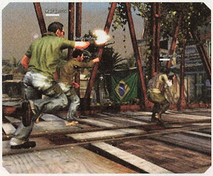
Max Payne's first two adventures are still worth playing through—and for those who haven't yet touched them, we might point out that the first game is available for download from the PSN store for $9.99.



As in previous games, Max can dual-wield sidearms to kill enemies (and consume ammunition) twice as fast.



Max Payne's world is filled with glass, most of which shatters realistically.



and much more sinister, with much deadlier implications for Max.

Wild In the Streets

As compelling as the story is, there's more to *Max Payne 3* than its narrative. There's also an arcade mode that offers the chance to replay finished levels in Score Attack (points are awarded for stylish kills) and New York Minute (kills extend the one-minute time limit), which can both be enjoyed while wearing Max skins that include his younger incarnations, complete with his original constipated expression modeled in full 3D.

Then there's multiplayer, which manages the tricky feat of bringing bullet time—along with a whole slew of other abilities—into an online setting without slowing down the action for everyone. There's of course basic team deathmatches as well as Payne Killer in which two players are transformed into the powered-up Max and Passos and fight against everyone else. While both are lots of fun, the standout mode is Gang Wars, which puts two teams through five-part, objective-based battles over a single map while Max and other characters narrate the action. Gang Wars matches run long, but the continually shifting objectives—which change depending on the results of the previous stage—go a long way toward keeping things from getting stale.

This being a modern shooter, we can also trick out our avatars (one for each of multiplayer's six gang factions) with custom clothing, weaponry, protective items, and "Bursts"—special abilities that include bullet time as well as things like health boosts, weaponry boosts, and tricks that mess with the opposing team's heads. The caveat is that everything but Bursts weighs us down, slowing health regeneration and movement speed until we eventually rank up and raise the cap for what we can carry into battle.

There are a few minor flies in *Max Payne 3's* ointment: getting stuck behind cover or caught on an empty clip when Last Man Standing kicks in can be incredibly frustrating, for example. But they didn't keep it from being a beautifully told, smartly paced, and relentlessly addictive shooter. The presentation's slick, the setting's believable, the story's unpredictable, and the violence is extreme to the point of actually being shocking, and it all adds up to create a hugely compelling experience. While Max himself may have turned into a wreck, his game is anything but.

MIKEL REPARAZ

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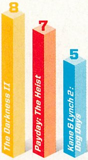
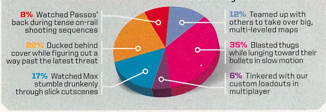


ScorePole

When it comes to crime-themed shooters, *Max Payne 3* easily stands above the rest.

What we did in... Max Payne 3



Info

PS3
STARHAWK

Format PS3
Pub SCEA
Dev LightBox Interactive/Santa Monica Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like the starry-eyed lovechild of a third-person shooter and an RTS.

Starhawk

Mount up, space cowboys

As the spiritual successor to 2007's multiplayer-only *Warhawk*, *Starhawk* retains and refines its forefather's fast-paced, third-person, air- and ground-based online combat. Little shock there, seeing as its developer, LightBox Interactive, is comprised of members of *Warhawk's* original creative team. Where the sorta-sequel does surprise, though, is in its full-on, story-driven solo campaign. More than a tacked-on, back-of-the-box bullet point, the single-player content is worth the price of admission for shooter fans who have no interest in fragging friends online.

In the dusty boots of space cowboy Emmett Graves, we fight mutants, mine precious Rift energy—the same resource that's infected said mutants—and turn the battlefield into our own personal playground thanks to *Starhawk*'s real-time strategy-inspired construction system. Dubbed "Build & Battle," the inventive feature allows us to spend Rift points (also the game's currency) to erect a variety of offensive and defensive structures. From sniper towers and auto turrets to vehicle-summoning garages and ally-spawning outposts, a dozen of these table-turning items are just a radial menu away.

On top of the obvious perks that come with, say, building an entire armory when ammo's running low, these structures produce eye-pleasing effects when triggered. Dropped from an orbiting ship at hurtling speeds, they crash to the surface before assembling themselves like a futuristic erector set. Plan their drops just right, and these masses of concrete and metal can even squash enemies, unlocking the "Mancake" Trophy, of course.

Sky High

While we loved surrounding ourselves with enemy-shredding turrets and buzzing past well-placed vehicle repair stations whenever our Razorback started spitting smoke, we wish the Build & Battle system was supported by better mission variety. Too many objectives consisted of simply prepping for incoming attacks by setting up structures, much as we would in a tower defense game. It's a small gripe—calling in constructs is a blast even during the most mundane missions—but something we wouldn't mind seeing addressed in a sequel.

Five Essential Build & Battle Tips

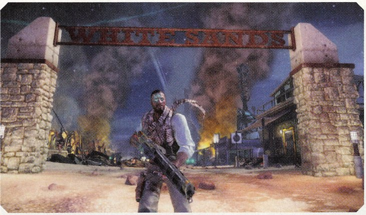
1 **Overkill**
Save yourself a lot of trouble and break the bank on auto turrets before the big bads arrive.

2 **Take Shelter**
Rather than building defensive walls, take cover in ammo-filled supply bunkers. No one gets in but allies.

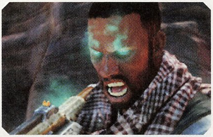
3 **Sitting Pretty**
On top of providing sharpshooting spots, sniper towers keep players high above on-foot attackers.

4 **Cozy Cover**
Instead of thinly spreading defensive walls over battlefields, build a personal player-protecting stronghold.

5 **Pit Stop**
It's much cheaper and easier to drive by a vehicle repair station than to build a brand new ride.



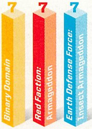
From its twangy guitar soundtrack to its dusty plains, *Starhawk* possesses an absorbing Old West vibe with its sci-fi trappings.



Despite being infected by Rift energy (those blue eyes aren't contact lenses), Emmett hasn't gone feral like his mutant adversaries.

When not building items to do our bidding, we can lock-and-load behind a fairly standard arsenal of guns and grenades. Aside from the D-pad feeling finicky when selecting weapons on the fly, the running-and-gunning yielded plenty of thrilling action. And coupled with the intuitive Build & Battle system, even something as simple as regenerating health became more engaging. Why frantically search for cover so we can heal when a wall can be dropped between us and our aggressive adversaries?

On top of littering the landscape with mutant guts, we're able to engage enemies while soaring through the stars. Piloting flying mechs dubbed Hawks, we can unleash homing missiles, bombs, and machinegun fire into attacking aircraft. The dog fighting, while accessible and arcadey, doesn't quite pack the same punch as the ground-based battles. That said, some of *Starhawk's* coolest missions combine space and surface combat, allowing us to effortlessly alternate between shooting baddies from space and landing our crafts to return to the on-foot action.



ScorePole
Starhawk soars past the sci-fi shooter competition.

Better Together

Once galaxy-spanning gunslingers have completed Emmett's story, they can mount up for *Starhawk's* robust suite of online options. Familiar modes like Capture the Flag, Deathmatch, and Team Deathmatch get a fresh feel courtesy of the Build & Battle mechanic. Thanks to the unpredictable nature of human players, the system feels even *more* dynamic—varying the pace of online matches by chucking constant curve balls. Because of this, we recommend newcomers first familiarize themselves with Build & Battle in the campaign, lest they're left wondering how the hell their buddies dropped a Hawk hangar on their heads.

Starhawk also includes its own take on the now-requisite horde mode. Welcoming up to four players, the survival challenge modestly mixes things up by randomizing its endless waves of enemies. More important than this minor twist, though, is the ability to sink earned Rift energy into on-the-fly construction projects, which ultimately separates this mode from similar ones in other games.

We keep returning to *Starhawk's* RTS-flavored feature because it's truly what elevates the game above familiar third-person shooter fare. It's the title's defining hook, and a damn fine one at that. Coupled with a surprisingly satisfying solo campaign and all the frantically-paced online fun we'd expect from *Warhawk's* follow-up, the ability to erect game-changing structures refreshingly sets *Starhawk* apart from the been-there-destroyed-that pack.

MATT CABRAL

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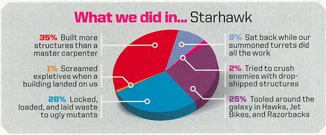
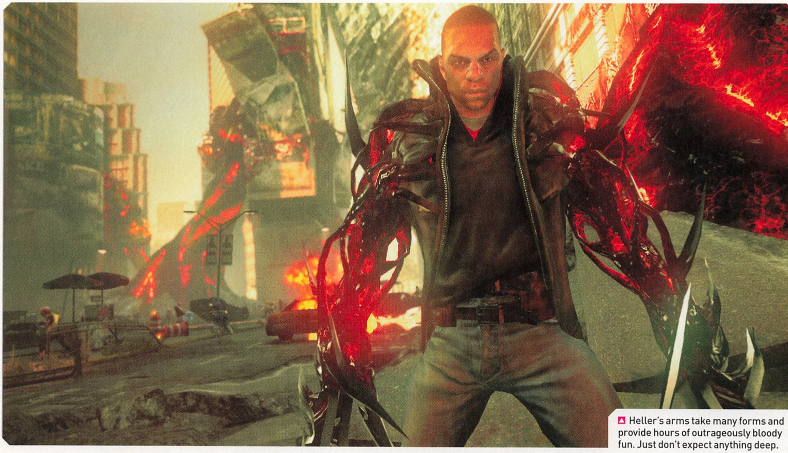
What we did in... Starhawk





Heller's arms take many forms and provide hours of outrageously bloody fun. Just don't expect anything deep.

Prototype 2

One step closer to the production model

Where the first *Prototype* began with a huge, chaotic bang, its sequel goes for a more muted intro. Sergeant James Heller—who blames the first game's "hero" Alex Mercer for his family's death—starts *Prototype 2* by stalking Mercer through Manhattan's ruined streets with a knife. Not only does Heller fail to kill Mercer, but Mercer actually grants Heller his own powers before setting him on the trail of the sinister Gentek corporation and its Blackwatch mercenaries—the *real* bad guys, or so Mercer says.

It's not the greatest beginning for a game about going crazy with really gross-looking superpowers. Fortunately, the game picks up steam soon after its extended tutorial, once again plunging us into a free-roaming, horror-filled adventure replete with buckets of gore and endless opportunities to wreak havoc. As before, we're dropped into an open New York City—now renamed New York Zero and expanded to three islands, all filled with ruins, refugees, and genetically altered monsters.

We can dash through the streets with alarming speed, sprint right up the sides of skyscrapers, and glide freely through the air before crashing back to earth, chucking cars into a few crowds, and absorbing some people through Heller's skin for health and a quick disguise. Like Mercer before him, Heller has a selection of powers and special abilities (now upgraded in a much more straightforward, streamlined way), most of which involve turning his arms into grotesque weapons. These can be immensely fun to experiment with, so

Info

Format PS3
Pub Activison
Dev Radical Ent.
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the first *Prototype*, but bigger, crazier, and more focused.

Five New Powers Rampaging just got a whole lot bloodier

1 **Tendrils**
Bind specific enemies or shoot Heller's tendrils out in every direction to grab nearby objects before contracting sharply.

2 **Shield**
Turn both of Heller's arms into big, spiky shields that let him parry blows, stun enemies, and even deflect rockets.

3 **Bio-Bomb**
Grab targets and implant them with a viral infection that turns them into Tendril grenades when thrown.

4 **Pack Leader**
Summon up to four hulking mutant monsters to attack Heller's enemies. Don't worry, they fight to the death.

5 **Weaponize**
Yank one of the mounted guns off a tank or chopper and wield it on foot. Ammo is limited, though.

▲ When we're done slicing up hulking enemies, we can spend some time seeking out collectibles.

▼ The optional, often goofy "Radnet" challenges revolve around the creative use of Heller's powers.

long as the game's somewhat erratic targeting system doesn't cause Heller to go blasting past his intended target.

Kill 'em All

Using NYZ as a huge acrobatic sandbox is where *Prototype 2* shines brightest, and playing around with Heller's powers in a crowd setting can be endlessly addictive. But there's much more to the game than that. There's Heller's story, for starters, which leads him to devour his way through Blackwatch and Gentek in a bid to get revenge, save innocent lives, and find out who's really behind the so-called "Mercer virus." As a narrative, it isn't too compelling, thanks in part to its charisma-free hero, and its mission design feels unimaginative, continually falling back on simple tasks that boil down to "kill those guys" or "destroy that thing." It's serviceable enough, with some fun moments and a refreshing (if only occasional) emphasis on assuming the forms of devoured humans to sneak around, but don't expect anything too elaborate.

While *Prototype 2's* story has its faults, the game is nevertheless jam-packed with fun things to do. Sure it isn't the smartest thing we've ever played, but that doesn't stop it from being outrageously fun. MIKEL REPARAZ

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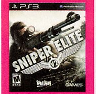
Sniper Elite V2

Now *that's* a headshot

Info



Format PS3
Pub 505 Games
Dev Rebellion
Price $49.99
ESRB Mature
It's like holding your breath in real life to steady your virtual weapon.

Though *Sniper: Ghost Warrior* generally gets all the credit for delivering gaming's definitive sharpshooting experience, 2005's *Sniper Elite* introduced well-placed bullets to brain-pans long before it was cool. Re-dubbed *Sniper Elite V2*, the PS2 classic is now back behind the scope, offering armchair marksmen an updated take on its satisfying sneak-and-shoot formula.

Smartly sidestepping the Omaha Beach-storming of most WWII shooters, *V2* tells the tale of an elite American soldier tasked with rescuing—or more often eliminating—the minds behind Germany's V2 rocket program. The nuanced gameplay is more about planning and patience than running-and-gunning. We plant traps before settling into a nest to systematically pick off targets, and seasoned snipers can even factor wind, bullet drop, and heart rate into the equation. The reward? Watching slo-mo projectiles shatter bones and pop internal organs like water balloons through the game's gruesome x-ray kill cams.

The third-person gunplay feels clunky when not behind the crosshairs and the deliberate pacing is an acquired taste, but the sharpshooting-focus, campaign co-op, and fresh take on WWII make *V2* a welcome alternative to all those *Call of Duty* clones. MATT CABRAL

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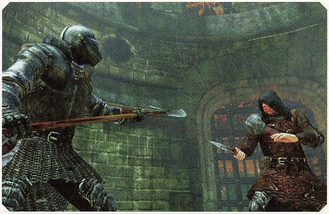
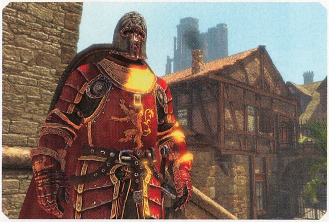


Reading is fundamental. And in this case, preferable. Despite the game's engaging storyline, *Throne* fans should stick to the books.



Game of Thrones

An empty throne at best

PS3
GAME of THRONES
ATLUS

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Atlus
Dev Cyanide
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like playing a grittier *Dragon Age II* with a broken controller.

As anyone who's either read the books or seen the HBO show can tell you, George R.R. Martin's fantasy epic *A Game of Thrones* is not an action-packed adventure tale. Instead, it's more about the personal infighting of powerful people and the resulting political intrigue. So it shouldn't surprise fans that the combat in this action-RPG is unforgivably awful, which is a problem since, as anyone who's played an action-RPG can tell you, all the great dialog, interesting characters, and challenging quests in Middle-earth can't save an action/adventure RPG if the combat is bad.

Most of the combat—which, because of the fiction, is limited to ranged and melee attacks—happens in real time. But because the controls are slow and unresponsive, there's a frustrating delay between when a button is pressed and a character acts. The game even stores the last three commands, as if it knows it can't keep up. It also doesn't feels as if the weapons are hitting anything; dead enemies just flop over after a while. There is an option to slow down time and issue commands, but considering how gritty the books and show are, this system feels just as unsatisfying.

What makes this really disappointing, though, is that some aspects actually work well. The game's sound and visuals make it feel cold and bleak like Westeros, while Martin helped craft a side story that seamlessly intertwines with the existing fiction. But without good combat, it's all just academic. PAUL SEMEL

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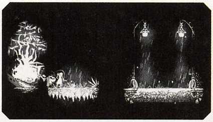
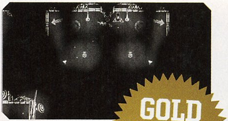
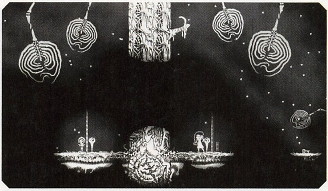




GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine



Closure

There is a light that never goes out

The phrase "go toward the light" assumes a much deeper meaning when everything in the dark ceases to exist. In *Closure's* monochromatic 2D world, where there is no light there is no ground, which can actually help as much as it hurts. We can hop through the darkness to reach a lit platform below or pull the light away from obstacles and jump past where they previously were. Each of the three main characters' worlds introduces new mechanics: disappearing lights, rotatable lights, and even a gun.

We play as a strange, faceless, spidery creature who must help these three characters find closure before the creature itself can enjoy an ending. One episode opens with a woman leaving the site of a car crash and ends with us walking past her hospital bed while a garish heart glows in the middle of a screen and a life support machine beeps patiently beside her. The story is a simple one, but each individual tale is left to interpretation and all three have a very poignant, surprising message comparable to games like *Journey* and *Braid*.

For those uninterested in discerning environmental clues to follow the narrative, the puzzles alone are worth the 15 bucks. While we were occasionally frustrated by trial-and-error tedium and forced micromanagement of multiple items, these annoyances were easily overshadowed by *Closure's* highly unique mechanics and presentation. ANNE LEWIS

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Info

Format PSN
Pub Eyebrow Int.
Dev Eyebrow Int.
Price $14.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like a dream... or maybe a nightmare? We can't really tell the difference.

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Format **PS3** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Bugbear Entertainment** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Teen**

Barring its predilection for drifting, *Ridge Racer: Unbounded* shares little with past franchise entries—it's more like a *Ridge Racer* game that's just seen *The Fast & The Furious*. As we tear around city streets, we drift, draft, and get airborne to fill our power meter. When at maximum, we tap X to either enjoy a temporary speed boost or speed boost while destroying something. But a race's entire momentum can be shattered by a single curiously realized collision—ground to a complete halt by a single obstacle in a sea of destructible objects. Though a create-and-share track builder does add to the fun, this is essentially just an enjoyable change of direction for the series. JAMES COATES

PlayStation 7

Atelier Meruru The Apprentice of Arland

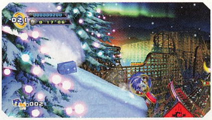
Format **PS3** Pub **NIS America** Dev **Gus** Price **$49.99 / $64.99 (deluxe set)** ESRB **Teen**

Like previous series installments, *Atelier Meruru* mixes its RPG elements with resource-management simulation. We explore areas to find exotic ingredients for alchemy while fighting off monsters. New to this title is the town-building component: Completing quests helps us develop various facilities, bring in new residents, and gradually open new gameplay features. There's no world-ending threat, but lavishly illustrated (though somewhat janky) visuals and charming character interactions still make Princess Meruru's quest for independence thoroughly engaging. It's not the longest or hardest RPG, but its heartfelt worldview makes it worth our time. HEIDI KEMPS

PlayStation 7

Sonic the Hedgehog 4 Episode II

Format **PSN** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sonic Team** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**



Sonic games have always worked best at top speed. When they're spent sprinting through loops and up and down ramps, they're exhilarating. Unfortunately for *Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II*, commitment to that joyous speed is severely lacking. The game starts off just fine, running through green fields at breakneck speed. But then, inexplicably, platforming sections that require precision and patience interrupt many of the speedy sections, creating an entirely unwelcome break in the otherwise great action. These sections could perhaps be overlooked if they were few and far between, but they become increasingly irksome in such a short game. TAYLOR COCKE

PlayStation 7

Minis Roundup

Idiot Squad

Price **$4.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

A battle over stolen barnyard animals kicks off some smart puzzle play in *Idiot Squad*. Plunking down directional tiles to herd sheep that are dressed like ninjas, football players, and soldiers weaves an increasingly complex web of fun that requires avoiding traps, farmers, and other menacing perils. **BUY**

Defenders of the Mystic Garder

Price **$3.49** ESRB **Everyone**

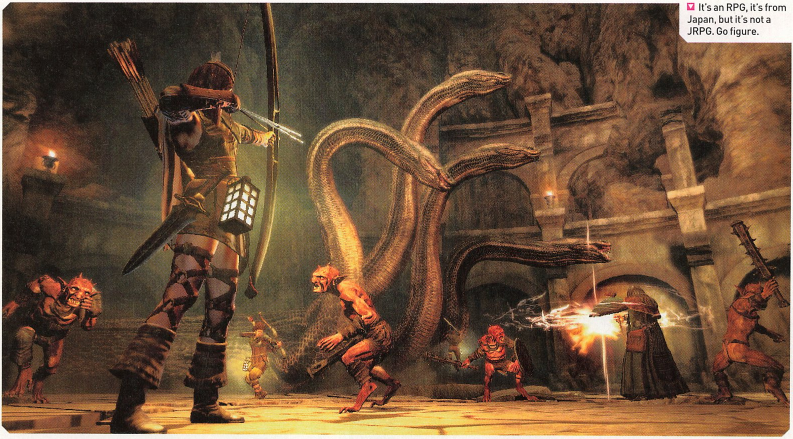
Protecting our precious fruits and veggies from the swarming backyard invaders is *Defenders of the Mystic Garden's* core. It gets off to a promising start with gnomish wizards and warriors, but this tower defense RPG starts to grate on the nerves with its repetitive banter and steep initial challenge. **SKIP**

Mini of the Month

Canabalt

Price **$2.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

The robot apocalypse is nigh! Giant mecha-things are annihilating the city. There's nothing left to do but run for our lives. Barreling and jumping our way across crumbling building tops at breakneck speeds as the world is thrashed around us is awesome. *Canabalt's* simple one-button gameplay requires fast reflexes, but seeing how far we can get before we fall to our doom is intensely addictive. **BUY**



It's an RPG, it's from Japan, but it's not a JRPG. Go figure.

Dragon's Dogma

East meets west meets abject frustration

Info

Format PS3
Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like a heavily diluted dose of *Lord of the Rings* that doesn't go down smooth.

In recent years, we've seen some Japanese developers strive to create more western-styled games, so it's hardly surprising that Capcom's fantasy roleplaying game *Dragon's Dogma* owes more to *Dragon Age* than *Dragon Quest*. But despite the game's obvious commitment to both the mechanics and the lore, serious problems, especially the totally unbalanced difficulty, undermine an otherwise epic adventure.

When a dragon attacks a small village, a feisty resident takes up arms, only to have the beast eat his (or, if you choose, her) heart. But when the wounded warrior somehow survives, he's declared to be the fabled "Arisen" and sets out to fulfill his destiny.

Not surprisingly, *Dogma* has everything we'd expect in an action-RPG: customizable characters, multiple careers, numerous side-quests, alternative medicine, and so on. All it needs is a first-person perspective option and the ode to *Skyrim* would be complete. That said, it does bring some new ideas to the well-worn formula. The inventory, for example, is divided up by what things *do* (tools, curatives, etc.), which means never running out of space for a better sword because every slot is filled with health potions.

Overpowered

Dogma also takes inspiration from other genres. While combat is fast and buttonmashy like most action-RPGs, large rocks and explosive barrels can be tossed at enemies as if this was a regular action game. Even enemies themselves can be given the heave-ho à la a wrestling game. There's also small game to be hunted like in *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*. Still, the most interesting crib comes from *Shadow of the Colossus*. When fighting such towering enemies as dragons and hydras, we can jump

Pawns are meant to be somewhat dispoable. Since they don't level up with the main character, they must swapped out regularly.

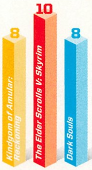
While this guy is a pushover, he's probably got an overpowered friend somewhere, ready to one-shot-kill you.

onto the beasts (though not climb) and attack while holding on for dear life.

Unlike *Shadow's* hero, however, our adventurer doesn't go it alone. He's aided by computer-controlled companions called Pawns, who are not only effective warriors but will offer a healing hand, thoughtfully pick up useful items they find (which can be shared by all), and even lead the way on occasion. They're also customizable, from their vocation to their attitude and can understand simple commands, though apparently saving our hero when he's hurt is just barely within their programming.

This is not *Dogma's* biggest issue, though. No, that would be the really, really uneven difficulty. Some specific enemies are ridiculously overpowered, especially compared to their compatriots and our hero. When fighting a group of bandits in the woods, for instance, the guys with dual blades will put up a decent fight, but ones armed with swords and shields can kill our hero or his Pawns with one shot. Similarly, getting nailed by an archer can send characters flying like they've been hit with a cannonball.

The disparity between the game's baseline difficultly and these super enemies is so frustrating that we actually wanted to stop playing at times. And to add insult to injury, there's only one difficulty setting and checkpoints are punishingly far apart (though there is the option to manually save).



ScorePole

With so many quality high-fantasy RPGs out there, *Dogma* just doesn't measure up.

Underwhelmed

Dogma also assumes everyone is familiar with the tenets of a western RPG. As a result, it neither eases us into the game's systems nor does a particularly good job of explaining what's actually going on. It also doesn't help that the dialog, button prompts, companions' health bars, and other HUD elements take up so much of the screen that we felt like our vision was being obscured even on a big-screen TV (though turning off our Pawn's subtitles helped a lot).

While the painfully uneven difficulty is *Dogma's* biggest frustration, its biggest disappointments are actually its narrative elements, settings, and creatures, which are so loyal to western fantasy tropes that they make the world feel...generic. Sure, every fantasy game is influenced by *The Lord of the Rings* and *Dungeons & Dragons*, but most don't follow them so slavishly. By failing to combine western action-RPG mechanics with eastern fantasy characters, settings, and archetypes, the developers missed a real opportunity to make something unique.

While *Dogma* does bring some interesting new ideas to western-style action-RPGs, it's ultimately defeated by its wildly unbalanced difficulty, generic approach to fantasy, and some gameplay issues that just needed more attention to detail. A bit of refinement and this could've been something special. **PAUL SEMEL**

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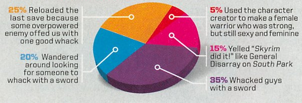
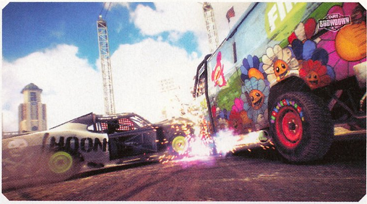
What we did in... Dragon's Dogma





Codemaster's RaceNet program mirrors the Autolog system found in EA's *Need for Speed* games. Racing just got more social!

Dirt Showdown

A new experience or just a fresh coat of paint?

Info

Format PS3
Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters Southam
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like a *Dirt 3* "What if?" that doesn't go quite far enough.

For a game that's clearly looking to appeal to an audience not interested in realism, *Dirt Showdown* sure feels rigid. As an arcade-style spinoff of the main *Dirt* series, it's certainly fun and more accessible than the semi-simulation-minded *Dirt* games, but you'd think Codemasters would've been more eager to really let the franchise go off the rails.

Showdown offers the standard Tour mode, where vehicles and events are broken up into three categories: Race, Hoonigan, and Demolition. Race events feature modes we've seen in previous *Dirt* games, while Hoonigan events are mostly repurposed Gymkhana events from *Dirt 3* (think obstacle courses). The Demolition events offer the biggest change of pace, shifting the focus from speed and precision to outright destruction.

Standard Demolition Derby is available, of course, but Eight Ball is the most hectic mode. Tracks with numerous figure-eight turns cause drivers to repeatedly intersect with leading and trailing vehicles. It's a fun mix of demolition and racing, and one of *Showdown's* strong points. The game also includes Joyride mode, another continuation of *Dirt 3's* open map Gymkhana events. Joyride tasks us with pulling off specific tricks in large, open maps. The absence of a time limit makes Joyride a relaxing diversion from the main game and good practice.

In some ways, however, *Showdown* can actually be more difficult than *Dirt 3*. While the relaxed handling and driver A.I. are fine, the game relegates the trademark flashback feature to Hoonigan events only. This is an odd choice as Hoonigan events are fairly predictable, unlike the more chaotic Demolition events, where we can go from first to last in a heartbeat.

Showdown is the first *Dirt* game to feature non-licensed cars, and while that may be a turnoff for some sim racers, Codemaster's custom creations are very well done and should appeal to all tastes. Demolition mode's rusty beaters and spray-painted hoopties are a nice change of pace from the usual shiny factory metal. Naturally, they all look gorgeous since *Showdown* runs on the same EGO 2.0 engine used for *Dirt 3*. Particle effects, vehicle damage, and lighting are all topnotch, and the game does a great job creating the sense of speed that a lot of simulation games lack.

Make no mistake, *Dirt Showdown* is a very fun game, but it needs to do more to differentiate itself from the main *Dirt* series. It's a good start in the right direction, but anyone with a copy of *Dirt 3* already on their shelves will probably be content with a rental.

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MICHAEL GRIMM

Mortal Kombat

Kompact but still lethal

PS VITA
MORTAL KOMBAT

Info

Format PS Vita
Pub Warner Bros. Int. Ent.
Dev NetherRealm Studios
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like having a tiny, psychotic sparring partner in our pocket.

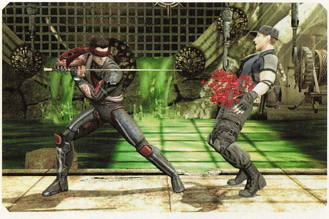
Vita is proving itself to be the quintessential portable fighting machine, and *Mortal Kombat* may yet be the best example of why. More than a straight port of the recently released PS3 *Komplete Edition*, the Vita edition offers us a bloody horde of quality extras. More importantly, it brings a nearly perfect translation of the superb fighter to the small screen.

The controls are smooth and responsive, and every move is intact. The huge roster of characters has made the transition, including bonus fighters Kratos, Freddy Krueger, Rain, Skarlet, and Kenshi. All the arenas and game modes are here as well. We can once more get sucked into hours of brutal action with the lengthy story mode, arcade ladder, and challenges. The whole experience looks, plays, and sounds great, even if the visuals aren't quiet as impressive on the smaller screen.

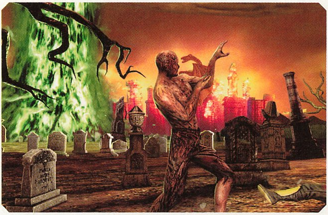
The Vita version also enjoys 150 new challenge levels that frequently incorporate the touchscreen (tap-based Fatalities, anyone?) and a tag team option in the Fight mode. Even without the Vita-specific additions, however, this is an easy recommendation as the game retains everything that made the franchise reboot an accessible alternative.

PlayStation The Official Magazine **9**

JASON D'APRILE



▲ Sure Fatalities are fun, but they can be so tricky to execute. Good thing Vita now lets us execute our opponents using the touchscreen!



◄ Gritty but likeable characters live or die depending on our actions.

GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

Info

Format PSN
Pub Telltale Games
Dev Telltale Games
Price $4.99 (or $19.99 for all five episodes)
ESRB Mature
It's like a personal journey through zombie hell, only awesome.

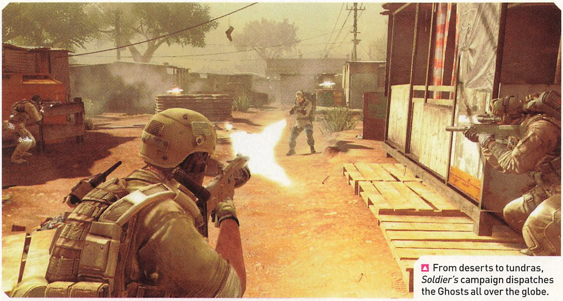
The Walking Dead Episode 1 – A New Day

This is only the beginning...

Making gut-wrenching decisions under intense pressure and stomaching the grisly consequences gives *The Walking Dead's* episodic adventure debut some serious weight. This first leg of what promises to be an emotionally jarring five-part journey delivers a very different and refreshing take on zombie apocalypse survival. Not only will our decisions impact the course of the narrative over all five episodes, our reactions during pressure-cooker situations ultimately determine the fate of familiar comic book characters as well. The urgent forward momentum feels absolutely harrowing.

A welcome break from the genre's puzzle-focused norm, brutal combat sequences tied to precise aim and split-second reflexes add to the tension, yet the grim setting and intriguing character interactions are still the main draw here. We're eager to circle back around after a few more episodes to report on how everything shapes up. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **9**



▲ From deserts to tundras, *Soldier's* campaign dispatches the Ghosts all over the globe.

▲ With 10 maps, three classes, four competitive modes, plus Guerilla and campaign co-op, *Soldier* is brimming with online content.

Ghost Recon Future Soldier

When terrorists strike, who ya gonna call?

Info

PS3
TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST RECON
FUTURE SOLDIER
M
3D

Format PS3
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Paris / Red Storm
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like an exciting new weapon in the combat shooter arsenal.

Trading in the teammate micro-management and tactical tedium once synonymous with the series, *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* offers a far more cinematic and streamlined experience than its predecessors. That's not to say, however, the Ghosts have gone all run-and-gun in an effort to please the *Call of Duty* crowd. Striking a superior balance between accessible action and cerebral strategizing, the shadowy operatives' latest terrorist-thwarting romp is their best yet.

As a member of an elite four-man team, we engage evil-doers with a futuristic arsenal that makes standard guns and grenades look primitive. From target-tagging sensor projectiles and flying recon drones to a controllable mech that quickly turns enemies to toast, there's no shortage of cool tech on the battlefield.

More engaging than the ability to stun baddies with drones or spy high-value targets through brick walls, though, is the Ghosts' physical and sharpshooting skills. The intuitive Cover Swap system lets us effortlessly navigate between secure points, while the endlessly satisfying Synch Shot allows us to simultaneously plant bullets in up to four different brainpans. A variation on similar paint-and-shoot mechanics, Synch Shot lets us order our team to take out the marked threats or join in on the synchronized stealth kill ourselves. Ghosts can also be directed to focus their fire on a single enemy or revive fallen allies.

Soldier is at its best when all these toys and talents are used in concert. Some highlights include donning metal-identifying goggles to spot gun-toting bad guys in a blinding sandstorm, then using Synch Shot to systematically take them out, or taking cover from baddies—and a blizzard—behind the Warhound while unleashing its earth-shaking payload.

Rather than leading us by the hand through lengthy tutorials, *Soldier* introduces its expansive and potentially complex combat options through great on-the-job training. Because of this, though, seasoned fans might find the early levels a bit too scripted. The latter missions encourage a more free-form approach, but still, from the sort-of on-rails sections that force us to shoulder an injured NPC to the inability to give Ghosts simple navigational orders, the campaign's likely to leave some faithful fans crying foul.

Of course, those same folks will probably spend more time playing with friends online, where they'll find more familiar tactical team play to sink their teeth into. On top of tackling the entire campaign as a four-player co-op effort, we can engage in competitive modes that offer more than the usual variations on Capture the Flag and Deathmatch. Whether chasing Conflict mode's evolving objectives or playing cat-and-mouse with a briefcase bomb in Saboteur, online battles are complemented by tons of customization options and a strong focus on teamwork. There's also a live-as-long-as-you-can wave-based challenge and, for the truly hardcore, a no-respawn Siege mode.

While a departure for the franchise, *Soldier* delivers some of the most fun we've had in cloaked camouflage. Offering an accessible experience for rookie recruits without abandoning those who helped make the series a success, it's an impressive evolution that could finally put the franchise on the same battlefield as its blockbuster competitors. **MATT CABRAL**

PlayStation The Official Magazine
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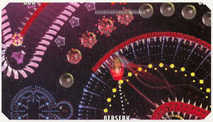
StarDrone Extreme

Format **PS Vita** Pub **Beatshapers** Dev **Beatshapers / TastyPlay** Price **$3.99 (download)** ESRB **Everyone**



Latching onto swirling gravity wells to swing our ship around the galaxy and collect star gems makes for mildly frantic fun in this updated Vita port, even if there isn't much here that feels terribly new. *StarDrone Extreme's* arcadey space-puzzle gameplay gets a minor reboot thanks to the game's transition to touch controls, which do give the experience some fresh momentum. However, drastic spikes in the difficulty still pop-up at bizarre intervals, and being asked to shell out 99 cents to skip the random ultra brutal stages each time they appear feels like an insult. Pay to not play? No thanks.

PlayStation **5**

NATHAN MEUNIER

House of the Dead 4

Format **PSN** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

EXCELLENT
P1
P2
P2 DAMAGE!
x8

Drowning in an abundance of outrageous zombies, atrocious one-liners, and piles of empty bullet casings, *House of the Dead 4's* campy arcade light-gun shooter action is a good fit on PS3, especially with added authenticity woven into the experience through Move support. We're not blown away by the plot setup or corny dialogue, but a ton of variety among flesh-eating foes and some seriously epic boss encounters kept our virtual guns blazing through the six main chapters and extra unlockable missions alike. This shooter's mindless, gun-centric amusement is delicious junk food for our itchy trigger fingers.

PlayStation **7**

NATHAN MEUNIER

World Gone Sour

Format **PSN** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Brain Plays** Price **$4.99** ESRB **Teen**

We heard "game about candy making its way toward the human stomach" and assumed "kid's game." We were delighted to be wrong. From its murderously insane characters to the macabre "sacrifice" mechanic where we toss Sour Patch Kids to certain death for our own gain, *World Gone Sour* consistently proved that it is not a family-friendly experience. Delightfully grisly aspects aside, the platforming continually failed and frustrated us. Occasionally the camera decided to stray behind us—beyond annoying in a 2D platformer—and other times jumping simply refused to work. For a $5 download, there is some morbid fun to be found, but the flaws can be quite rage inducing. **ANNE LEWIS**

PlayStation **6**

DLC Roundup

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City Echo Six Expansion Pack 1

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

This trio of special ops missions in the zombie-infested Raccoon City pits us against USS sniper squads at City Hall, includes a rowdy underground encounter with the hulking Nemesis, and features a face-off with G-Birkin as we dig deeper into the outbreak's mystery.

FIFA Soccer 12 UEFA EURO 2012

Price **$19.99** ESRB **Everyone**

They don't call it soccer in Europe, but that's no reason to skip celebrating the 2012 European Football Championship with this massive expansion. Recreating the tournament with eight official stadiums, 53 UEFA teams, and real storylines from the actual competition make this a no-brainer for soccer fanatics.

Download of the Month

Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning Teeth of Naros

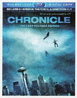
Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

This deceptively deep DLC expansion teams us up with a group of mercenaries on a trek to the mystical floating city of Idylla, puts us in touch with a new race of giants, and thrusts us into the midst of a rapidly spreading war. Beyond the gripping tale, there are loads of side-quests and a veritable arsenal of new weapons.

Chronicle

A superhero origin flick that finds its footing

Info



Price $39.99
Creators Josh Trank, Max Landis
Starring Dane DeHaan, Alex Russell, Michael B. Jordan
Rated PG-13
Extras Deleted scene, camera test, pre-viz materials.

Chronicle is one of the best movies to use the shaky found-footage style, although its success might have been in spite of, rather than because of, its camera usage. More importantly, it's the most (theoretically) realistic superhero origin story we've ever seen. The camcorder usage gives it a gritty, authentic feel, but the movie uses its characters' telekinetic powers to make sure the cinematography still feels cinematic instead of homegrown.

Since the main character is obsessed with filming everything around him, and can float the camera and move it at will, *Chronicle* neatly sidesteps the claustrophobic nature of the style. There are some clever uses of this technique, though—such as when the movie seamlessly flips through any available camera to catch different angles of the scene. That said, the action in this film is amazing, and even with all the camera tricks, the style feels restrictive at times.

Beyond clever camera work, the core of *Chronicle* is its excellent story about three very different boys who, together, find some kind of artifact that gives them incredible telekinetic abilities. There's never any doubt who's going to turn bad—the movie essentially shouts it out right from the start—but the movie never lets its characters feel cheap or clichéd. There's a palatable sense of wonder as we watch them learn to control their newfound power and discover new uses for it—particularly during the flight sequence.

The movie is ultimately a modern parable for why teenagers should never be given superpowers. As both a morality tale and superhero story, *Chronicle* works amazingly well, but the mandatory pre-power introductions last a bit too long, and some of the teenage soap operatics, while certainly realistic, are a bit much. Also, the death of one of the characters is handled so suddenly that it loses most of its emotional punch and hurts the story.

The Blu-ray is an extended cut, and while the new material isn't a revelation, it offers enough to coax fans of the film to rush out and buy it. The disc includes a deleted scene and some behind-the-scenes shorts, but the rest of the extras are pretty light. Regardless, this is a superb twist on standard superhero tales and deserving of BD collection shelf space. **JASON D'APRILE**

PlayStation The Official Magazine
8

True Blood
Season Four
A taste worth developing

Info
Price $79.98
Creators Alan Ball, Michael Lehmann, Charlaine Harris
Starring Anna Paquin, Ryan Kwanten, Stephen Moyer
Rated TV-MA
Extras Behind-the-scenes videos, bios, commentaries.

After a shaky third season, *True Blood* rises to hit the proverbial nail on the head. Season four broadens and deepens the expanding cast, deals with a wide array of issues and drama, and never forgets the absurdity of its premise. The humor is thankfully ratcheted up for the fourth season, as is the sheer volume of hot naked bodies—enough so that even the more cynical viewer might overlook the goofy opening in fairy land.

Fairies play an increasing role as Sookie learns more about her true nature, but so do were-panthers, witches, shifters, and vampire politics. *True Blood* has always had a knack for fleshing out its characters, and that's certainly true this time around. Jason Stackhouse—Sookie's goofy, sex-addled brother—is especially engaging this season as he takes some surprising turns, but all the plot developments and character growth feel less strained this time around.

Viewers should be used to the nearly endless parade of sex on the show, but season four manages to top previous episodes right from the start, so delicate newcomers beware. Beyond that, the more humorous nature of the novels really shines through. Despite significant departures from the books, the show manages to mine heavily from its source material for almost all of its plot mechanisms.

Admittedly, the humor here is of the decidedly dark sort, which suits the show perfectly. So, fans of the bizarre, macabre, and noir-ish sorts of fun will get a lot more mileage out of the show in general. Either way, series' newcomers and most longtime viewers should enjoy the direction of this season—it's as far away from *Twilight* as a vampire tale can be.

HBO, as usual, has thrown in plenty of nice extras—commentary and tons of extra backstory material—and the presentation quality of the Blu-ray transfer is much better than watching it on cable or satellite. The 1080p video quality is gorgeously detailed, and simply makes Blu-ray the best way to watch the show. JD

PlayStation The Official Magazine 8

Blu-ray Roundup

Haywire
Price $39.99 **Rated** R

Thanks to its superb cast and expert direction from Steven Soderbergh, *Haywire* makes the betrayed-spy genre seem fresh and interesting again. Gina Carano (a former MMA champ) shines here as the betrayed operative, and the intelligent and intense plot make this an exceptional mix of action and thriller. 8

Safe House
Price $34.98 **Rated** R

Terrific performances and excellent action save an otherwise clichéd spy thriller. Denzel Washington plays the same character he always does; Ryan Reynolds continues to show off his skills. The movie feels like an homage to Ridley and Tony Scott flicks, to the point where it has little identity of its own. 6

The Darkest Hour
Price $30.49 **Rated** PG-13

Is it really that hard to make a good alien invasion movie? *The Darkest Hour* isn't the worst, but it muddles its clever monsters and ideas with uninteresting characters and breaks in logic and continuity, and just gets lost. 4

City Under Siege
Price $29.98 **Rated** NR

A kind-of *Forrest Gump* superhero tale from the east, this strange movie about circus performers who get superpowers is hit and miss. The action is fun, the humor is weird, and for fans of Asian cinema, it's worth a look. 6

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

OLYMPUS
LS-100
MULTI-TRACK LINEAR PCM RECORDER
PEAK

Sony SmartWatch

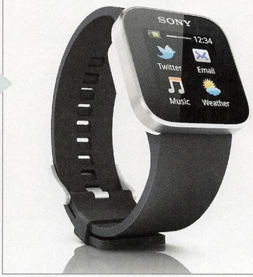
Encased in plastic and aluminum and measuring only .3-inches thick, this watch can wirelessly control the music on a smartphone, and read tweets, texts, e-mails or Facebook updates sent from phone to watch.

$150
sonymobile.com

Olympus LS-100

It may look like a Ghost-buster's PKE meter, but the LS-100 is an extremely capable digital sound recorder. Use it for field recordings, podcasts, concerts, or even band practice.

$400
olympusamerica.com



Epson Moverio Video Glasses

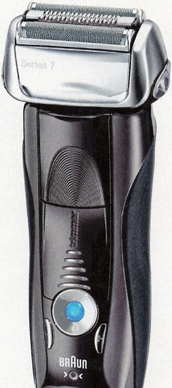
Offering up to 32GB of storage, Wi-Fi, built-in Dolby Mobile 2 stereo earphones, and transparent lenses for see-through viewing, the Moverio is equivalent to watching a 320-inch screen from 20 meters away.

$700
epson.com

iPen

The first "active digitizer" stylus for iPad, iPen allows for precision writing and drawing. The attached receiver picks up the iPen's signal and its precise position above the screen.

$89
cregle.com



Logitech UE Air Speaker

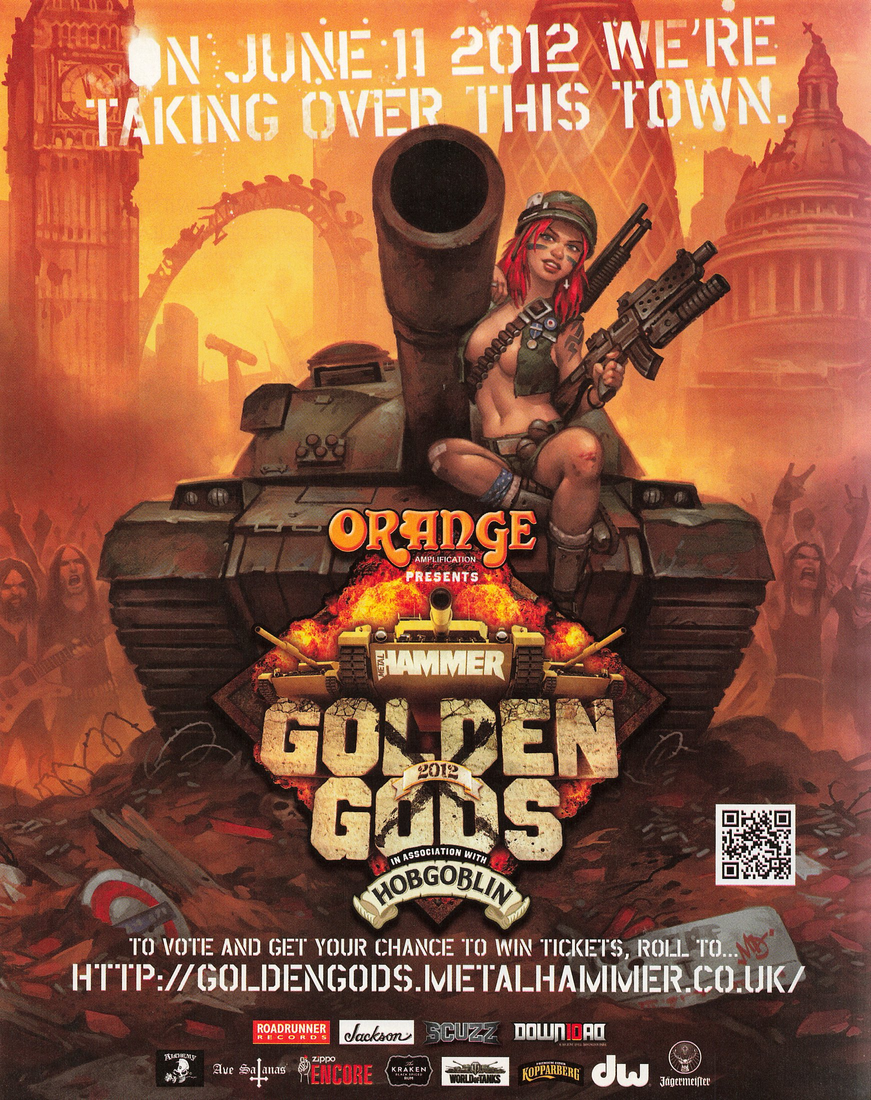
Logitech's first AirPlay-enabled and Ultimate Ears-branded speaker, the UE Air is luxury gadgetry. And it bumps: Setting its volume to less than half is enough to fill a room with sound.

$400
logitech.com

Braun Series 7 790cc Pulsonic Shaver

Though this three-headed shaver has a relatively small surface area, the oscillating middle head delivers up to 10,000 vibrations per minute, varying its speed according to a beard's density.

$270
braun.com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DOWNLOAD
ALCHEMY
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Zippo ENCORE
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PS3
PSP
PSVITA
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
Sly's back!
Thieves in Time is Sly Cooper's best adventure yet
CUTTING EDGE INFO Assassin's Creed III REVEALED
REVIEWED Mass Effect 3 Street Fighter X Tekken Silent Hill: Downpour Ninja Gaiden 3
FUTURE GAMES What to expect from PS4
MAX PAYNE 3 GRAVITY RUSH SOUTH PARK RESIDENT EVIL

Anyone else catch the clock tower in the upper right corner? Clever right?! That Sly sure is sneaky.

That's Just, Like, Your Opinion, Man

I am going to unsubscribe from your magazine. You give almost any game that has any kind of Japanese development to it a low and bias score without even playing it thoroughly. Being an RPG gamer who prefers JRPGs (PS3 is the only platform left for them), I am convinced the people that do the reviews at your magazine are nothing but a bunch of frag-heads who do nothing but play games like *Call of Duty* all day. *Hyperdimension Neptunia mk2* is getting 10 out of 10s and an average of 8.6 out of 10 from the gaming website I visit often, and that is just one out of many examples of your bias. The fact that you call yourselves professional gamers irritates me. From here on, I am just going to get my gaming news from a more reliable, professional gaming website.
DRAGON X THE INTERNET

You seem to be making a lot of assumptions here, Dragon. Biased against Japanese developers? Not thorough? Frag-heads? Hmm...well, we could spend a few hundred words pointing out all of our previous Japanese-developed Game of the Year winners or describing our multi-stage review system or detailing our reviewer selection process... But instead, we'll just point out that we're having a little trouble finding a 10 out of 10 score for Neptunia mk2 *anywhere. The best we could find equated to an 8 out of 10 (and that seemed like an exception). Now, being in line with the overall range of a game's review scores doesn't mean that we're right, but it does indicate that the title may be an acquired taste. You need to take a deep breath, Dragon. You love what you love, and that's great. One reviewer's criticisms could never wreck that. Just relax and have fun.*

Mystery Meat

If you could have a bag of chicken nuggets in the shape of any videogame character(s), who would you choose?
DAVID DURENSKY MINNESOTA

This feels like a trick question, but on the other hand...Sackboy? He'd be delicious, right?

Keep Movin'

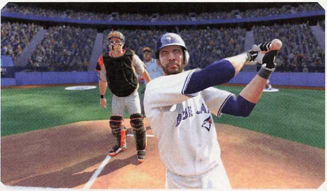
Even if you don't care for them, motion controls are here to stay. But here's the thing: Some PS3 games are made for the PS Move while many others offer it as a secondary option. For the games that actually "require" PS Move, your reviews are awesome, but I've noticed a startling trend in your magazine. When a game is only "compatible," the PS Move is not mentioned at all! This was the case with *LittleBigPlanet 2* and *NBA 2K12*. Even *Top Spin 4* only got a sentence under a screenshot. More recently it was *MLB 12: The Show*. I read in your

Update Upgrade

I just finished reading issue 58's mail section and noted the question about patches and updates. I was surprised that you didn't mention the fact that PlayStation Plus subscribers have all of their patches and updates downloaded and installed automatically. Even with all of the free content that I receive from my subscription, the automatic update is my favorite feature. **REBECCA** THE INTERNET

Well, now that you mention it...

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.



February 2012 preview that I could "bat, pitch, field, and base run from behind the wand." Sadly, none of this was in the review. I love the magazine and won't miss an issue, but this is the official magazine and I look for a lot of information in your pages. Can I get more PS Move coverage? If not from the official magazine, then where?

SOLOMON WILLIAMSON PONTIAC, MI

When it comes to reviews, we try to focus on the core experience above all else. As a result, ancillary information is sometimes cut in order to create space for essential commentary. And since Move controls rarely make or break an experience, they're occasionally relegated to a passing acknowledgement in a screenshot caption. Sad but true. Rest assured, though, if there's something genuinely noteworthy about a game's Move controls, we cover it.

Sigh-rim

I know you guys are not Bethesda but maybe you could answer this for me. Why is it that Xbox players get *Skyrim* content before us? I mean, I think we PS3 players should get it sooner considering all the issues on the PS3 version of *Skyrim*. Does Bethesda really need that extra money they get paid by releasing it for the Xbox sooner? What ever happened to the good old days when everyone got content at the same time?

BEAU THE INTERNET

Not to be rude, Beau, but what "good old days"? Exclusivity deals are as old as the console war itself. At this point, we just have to accept them. And when you think about it, will PS3 gamers really be rushing out to spend more money on a game that didn't totally work the first time around? We love Skyrim, *but we would definitely understand if PS3 gamers feel a bit gun-shy around it.*

Ask Anne

Q I love your expert opinions in the ways of gaming but was wondering if you could help me in my search for love. I have a huge crush on your Assistent Editer [*sic*], Anne Lewis. Would you like to go out for dinner and the movies?

DANIEL
THE INTERNET

A Aww, thanks Daniel, buuut I don't think I can. I mean, I don't know how serious you are, but I'd recommend talking to girls you know in real life! It's easy to fall for someone you've never actually met, but you'll inevitably be disappointed when she doesn't live up to all the qualities you've imagined for her. Be brave and get out there!

The Worst? Really?

I have read recent news about Sony's new videogame system (Orbis). Frankly I'm extremely excited about this, but the news about only being able to play a "demo" of a game if it is pre-owned (or not being able to play it at all) is—and I think I can speak on the behalf of every PlayStation owner when I say this—literally the worst idea anybody has ever come up with. I love Sony. I always have and I always will, and this won't bother me as much because I usually never sell my games. But please listen to me when I say this: Not being able to play used games could potentially end the gaming franchise Sony has come to know. This decision could be one of the worst financial moves in the history of Sony. I will buy the new system either way, but Sony, just think about what you're doing. Forget about the money or whatever reason you could possibly have to do this; I can tell you with certainty it's not worth it. I believe you will make the correct decision, not only for your consumers but for yourselves.

JOSH THE INTERNET

First off, "Orbis" is a completely unsubstantiated rumor. It's possible all that stuff about not being able to play used games is true, but at this point, there's no solid evidence that anybody outside of Sony knows anything about the next PlayStation. Second, preventing gamers from playing used games would likely be much more detrimental to companies like GameStop than to Sony itself, but it's not likely to destroy either one.

The Gift of Inconvenience

PLAYSTATION Network
$20

This email is about PlayStation Network gift cards. I get one and I try to put it in the PlayStation store and it always loads really slow and then it says service undergoing maintenance. I try to put the code in over and over again in different ways from menu and from the cart until finally after 30 minutes it works. I need help. Why!?!?!?!?!?!?

AIDEN THE INTERNET

Maybe all your extra question marks and exclamation points are clogging the system? Either that or your Internet connection just kind of sucks. Try switching providers!

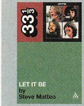
Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

The Legend of Korra

"You see what happens when you're too distracted by games and magazines? You don't know that *The Legend of Korra*, follow-up to the brilliant animated series *Avatar: The Last Air Bender* is coming until the week of its premier. Inexcusable."

ROGER BURCHILL



33 1/3 Book Series

"Want an inside look at some of the most influential albums ever recorded? Each book in the 33 1/3 series recounts the creation of a different seminal work, from The Beatles' *Let it Be* to The Pixies' *Doolittle*. Music nerds go!"

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

GoJo Hands Free

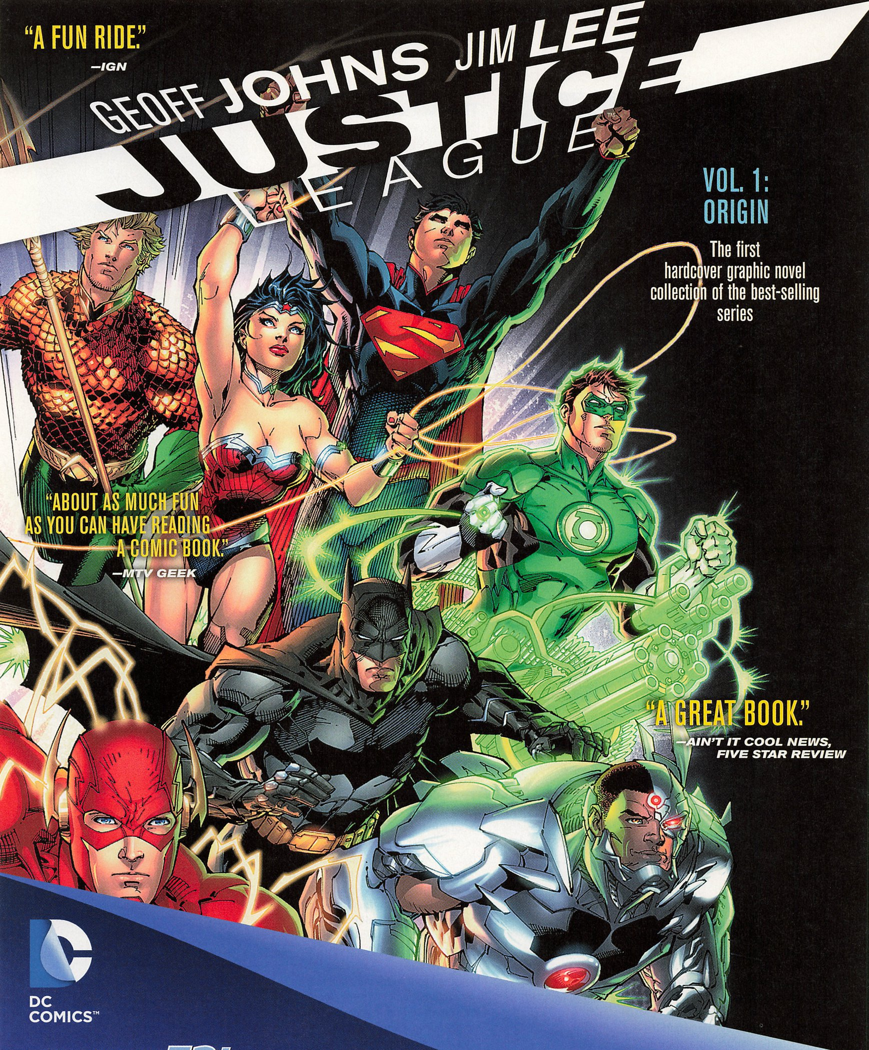
"I am a woman who appreciates stupid things, and the GoJo Hands Free headset is one of the stupidest things I've ever seen. Yes, I need a phone strapped to my face in order to be happy."

ANNE LEWIS

Bad Machinery

"John Allison's quirky, long-running daily webcomic focuses on a mainly female cast of students and the tragicomic, often paranormal mysteries that befall the English town of Tackleford. It is brilliant. Read it at scarygoround.com."

MIKEL REPARAZ



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—IGN

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—MTV GEEK

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—AIN'T IT COOL NEWS, FIVE STAR REVIEW

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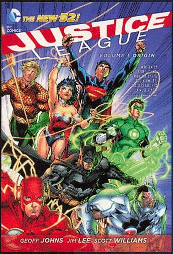
THE NEW 52!

MAY 2012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DC COMICS–THE NEW 52!

GRAPHIC NOVELS RELEASE SCHEDULE

MAY

- Animal Man Vol 1: The Hunt
- Batman Vol 1: The Court of Owls
- Catwoman Vol 1: The Game
- Green Arrow Vol 1: The Midas Touch
- Green Lantern Vol 1: Sinestro
- Justice League International Vol 1: The Signal Masters
- Justice League Vol 1: Origin
- Stormwatch Vol 1: The Dark Side
- Wonder Woman Vol 1: Blood

JUNE

- Batman: Detective Comics Vol 1: Faces of Death
- Batwoman Vol 1: Hydrology
- Frankenstein Agent of S.H.A.D.E. Vol 1: War of The Monsters
- Legion of Super-Heroes Vol 1: Hostile World
- Mister Terrific Vol 1: Mind Games
- Red Lanterns Vol 1: Blood and Rage
- Static Shock Vol 1: Supercharged

JULY

- Batgirl Vol 1: The Darkest Reflection
- Batwing Vol 1: The Lost Kingdom
- Batman and Robin Vol 1: Born to Kill
- Demon Knights Vol 1: Seven Against the Dark
- Grifter Vol 1: Most Wanted
- Men of War Vol 1: Uneasy Company
- Suicide Squad Vol 1: Kicked in the Teeth

AUGUST

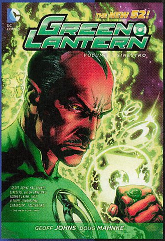
- Deathstroke Vol 1: Legacy
- Hawk and Dove Vol 1: First Strikes
- O.M.A.C. Vol 1: Omactivate!
- Resurrection Man Vol 1: Dead Again
- Superman: Action Comics Vol 1: Superman and The Men of Steel
- Superboy Vol 1: Incubation
- Swamp Thing Vol 1: Raise Them Bones

SEPTEMBER

- Aquaman Vol 1: The Trench
- Birds of Prey Vol 1: Trouble in Mind
- The Fury of Firestorm: The Nuclear Men Vol 1: God Particle
- Green Lantern Corps Vol 1: Fearsome
- Legion Lost Vol 1: Run from Tomorrow
- Teen Titans Vol 1: It's Our Right to Fight
- Voodoo Vol 1: What Lies Beneath

OCTOBER

- All-Star Western Vol 1: Guns and Gotham
- Batman: The Dark Knight Vol 1: Knight Terrors
- Green Lantern: New Guardians Vol 1: The Ring Bearer
- I, Vampire Vol 1: Tainted Love
- Justice League Dark Vol 1: In the Dark
- Nightwing Vol 1: Traps and Trapezes
- The Savage Hawkman Vol 1: Darkness Rising
- Supergirl Vol 1: The Last Daughter of Krypton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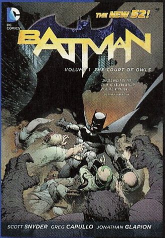
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THE NEW 52!
BATMAN
VOLUME 1 THE COURT OF OWLS
SCOTT SNYDER GREG CAPULLO JONATHAN GLAPION

NOVEMBER

- Blackhawks Vol 1: The Great Leap Forward
- Blue Beetle Vol 1: Metamorphosis
- Captain Atom Vol 1: Evolution
- DC Universe Presents Vol 1 Featuring Deadman & Challengers of the Unknown
- The Flash Vol 1: Move Forward
- Red Hood and The Outlaws Vol 1: Redemption
- Superman Vol 1: What Price Tomorrow?

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PSN
Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

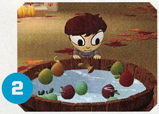
1

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often, but never feel frustrated about it.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**



2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure in the game itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by developer Tim Schafer's trademark sense of humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

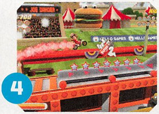
3

Frightening Lightning

inFamous
Festival of Blood

This standalone spinoff sees *inFamous* hero Cole MacGrath facing off against vampires. At stake? (groan) Cole's very own soul. It's enough to make vampires fashionably cool again—in spite of *Twilight*.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**



4

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

An enthralling mix of *Excitebike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous on a motorbike has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

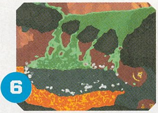
5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest AAA offerings. Consider it a suitable substitute for a bouquet for your loved one.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



6

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien- and rock-blasting galore, the fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental-puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our minds and our reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

7

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic
Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes*, with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

8

Hardcore Brawler

Street Fighter III
Third Strike Online

This perfect port of the legendary 1999 arcade game features all-new netcode that virtually eliminates lag. *Third Strike's* deep, demanding mechanics have earned it a diehard following. It deserves to be rediscovered and celebrated.

9 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom/Iron Galaxy**

9

Ladies Fight Night

Skullgirls

Although the fighting genre is in the midst of a resurgence, it's nice to see a new IP join the fray. *Skullgirls* features a cast of eight hand-drawn, superpowered femme fatales and offers an enticing mix of 2D fighting accessibility and depth. Don't overlook this one.

9 Pub **Konami/Autumn Games**
Dev **Reverge Labs**

10

We Are Not Alone

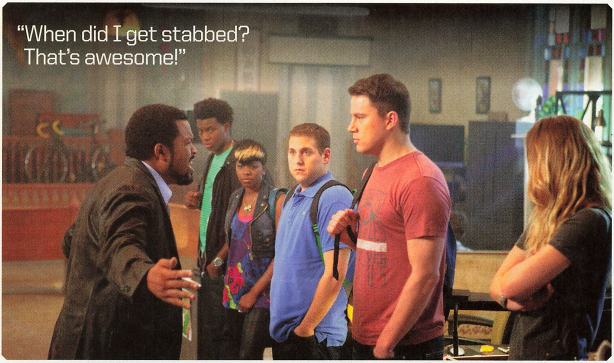
Journey

The hauntingly beautiful and atmospheric *Journey* has us wandering a desert to reach a distant mountain. Along the way, we may or may not encounter and wordlessly communicate with fellow travelers who can aid us in our quest. Is this a game, or a metaphor for life?

8 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"When did I get stabbed? That's awesome!"

The only thing getting blown tonight is their cover.
SENIOR PROM
21 JUMP STREET

21 Jump Street

ETA **June 26** Rated **R** Genre **Comedy / Action** Studio **Columbia Pictures**

Who says reboots have to suck? This new—more comedic—*21 Jump Street* is full of action, clever references for fans, and Jonah Hill being goofy and awkward. Two rookie cops—Hill and Tatum—are assigned to, well, reboot an old undercover operation requiring them to play the part of high school students and track down the people behind a popular new drug. Blood, drugs, and delightfully crude humor ensure this movie isn't one for the family though.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol
Immortals
The Sitter (Unrated)
Contraband
The Darkest Hour

TV Shows

The Walking Dead: Season 2
Family Guy: Season 10
South Park: Season 16
The Legend of Korra
The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes: Season 2

BEST FREE STUFF

①

Massive Multiplayer

Mass Effect 3 Resurgence Multiplayer

Two slick new maps expand the combat landscape in this multiplayer expansion, but it's the new characters and guns that get our blood pumping.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

②

Street Beats

Ridge Racer: Unbounded Music Packs

High-speed cruising isn't the same if we're not cranking good tunes. These free music packs include some familiar jams for longtime fans.

Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Bugbear Entertainment**

③

Get Rich Quick

Treasures of Montezuma Blitz (Vita)

Ancient treasure and sparkling gems are calling, and it's our job to match them up fast. This freemium puzzler is solid fun, with a few purchasable extras.

Pub **Alawar Entertainment**
Dev **SPL**

④

Kit and Cadoodle

Paint Park (Vita)

Use PS Vita's touchscreen to get creative on your own or with the help of a few other friends in this open-ended art program. Masterpieces can then be shared locally or online.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCEA**

⑤

Urban Decay

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City Echo Six Prologue

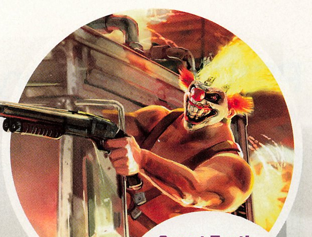
This free prologue mission puts us in the shoes of U.S. special operatives. It's a great way to extend the fun.

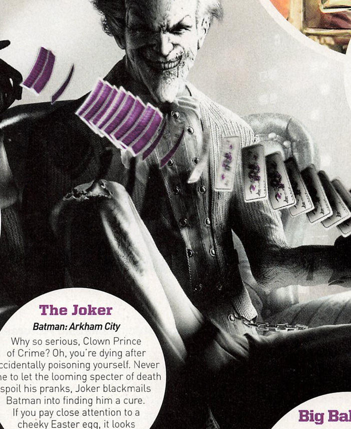
Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Slant Six Games**

Clowns

PlayStation's most fiendish floppy-footed abominations

WARNING SPOILER ALERT!
PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

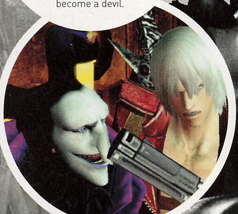




Jester

Devil May Cry 3

Back in ye olden times, the humble court jester was the clown of his day. Back in ye recent-ish times of 2005, this evil reality-distorter was a demonic joker who'd threaten to spank Dante's ass while spewing giant electrified balls. Jester is actually the alter-ego of ultra-villain Arkham, who sacrificed his wife to become a devil.



Sweet Tooth

Twisted Metal

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice crea... Oh, hey, everyone in the vicinity just had their throat slit by a homicidal clown. Sweet Tooth wasn't always obsessed with offing his family. Once, he was a simple ice-cream man named Marcus Kane. Sadly, those days ended when he started listening to the murderous voices in his head.

The Joker

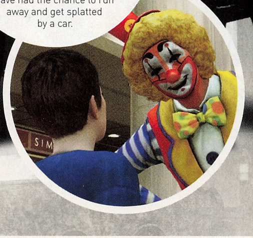
Batman: Arkham City

Why so serious, Clown Prince of Crime? Oh, you're dying after accidentally poisoning yourself. Never one to let the looming specter of death spoil his pranks, Joker blackmails Batman into finding him a cure. If you pay close attention to a cheeky Easter egg, it looks like he could have sired a demented kid, too.

Big Balloons

Heavy Rain

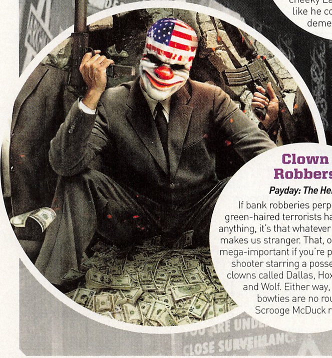
Note: may not be actual name. All right, so we made up this creep's moniker, but he's still indirectly responsible for the death of our hero's son. After all, if Ethan Mars hadn't spent 14 hours searching for spare change to pay for his kid Jason's glorified ball of helium, the annoying brat wouldn't have had the chance to run away and get splatted by a car.

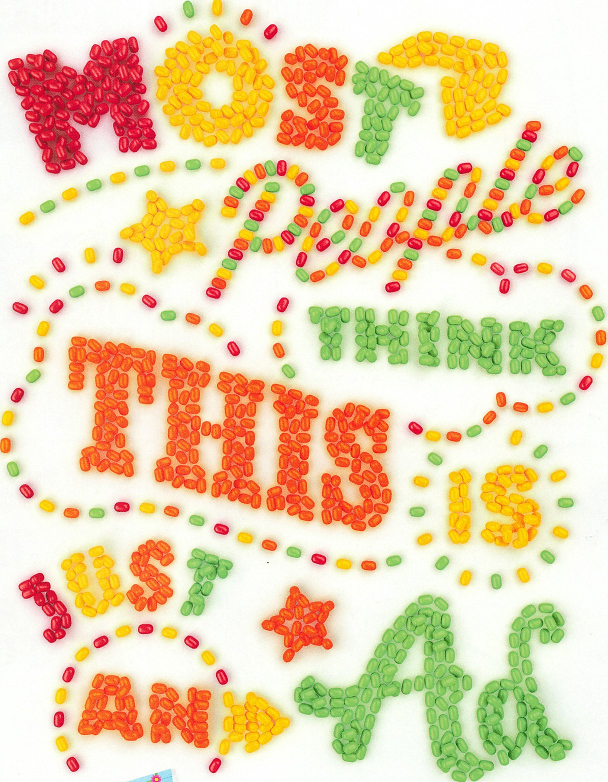


Clown Robbers

Payday: The Heist

If bank robberies perpetrated by green-haired terrorists have taught us anything, it's that whatever doesn't kill us makes us stranger. That, or teamwork is mega-important if you're playing a co-op shooter starring a posse of thieving clowns called Dallas, Hoxton, Chains, and Wolf. Either way, spinning bowties are no route to Scrooge McDuck riches.

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TEEN ™

T

Alcohol Reference
Blood
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Tobacco
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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